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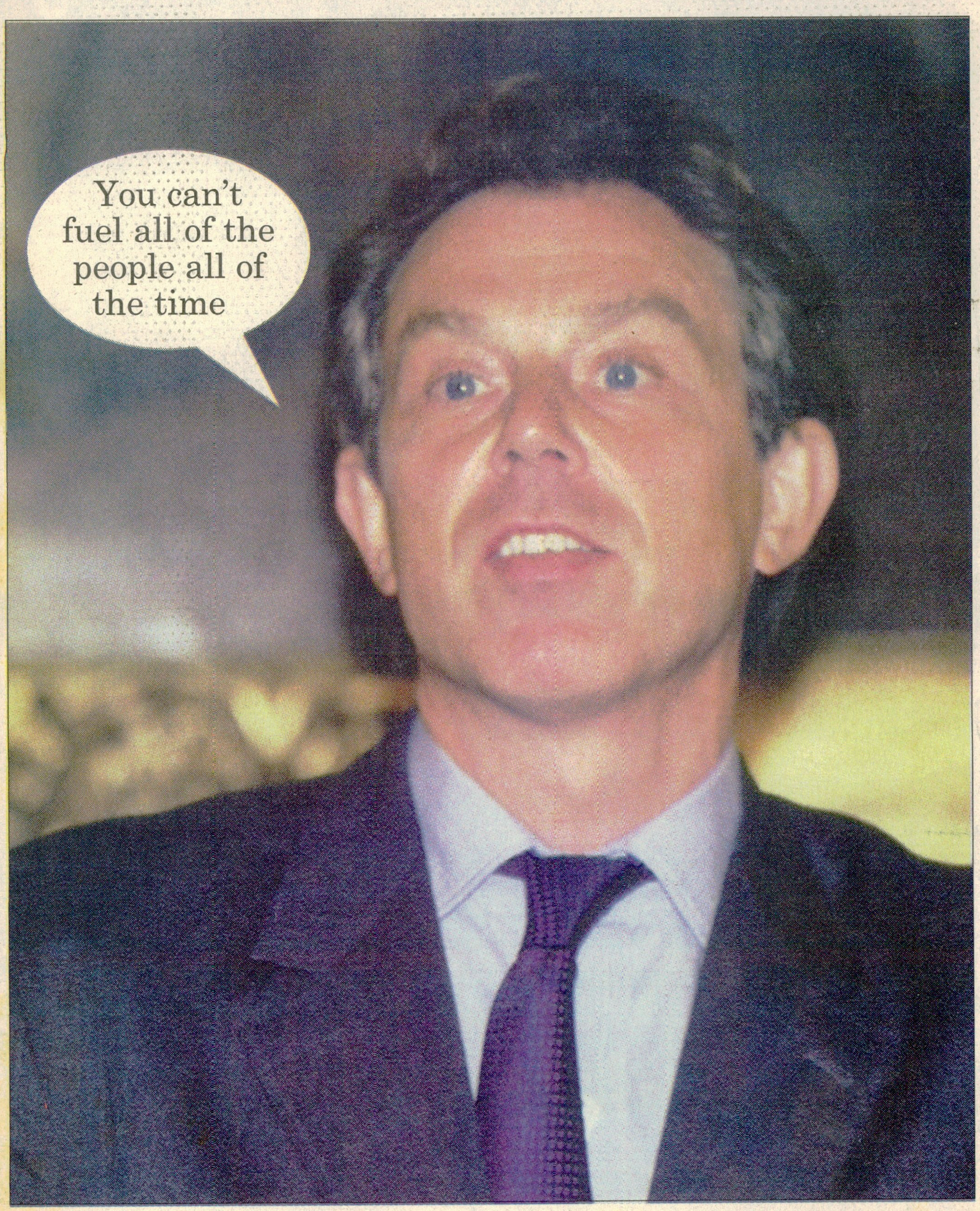

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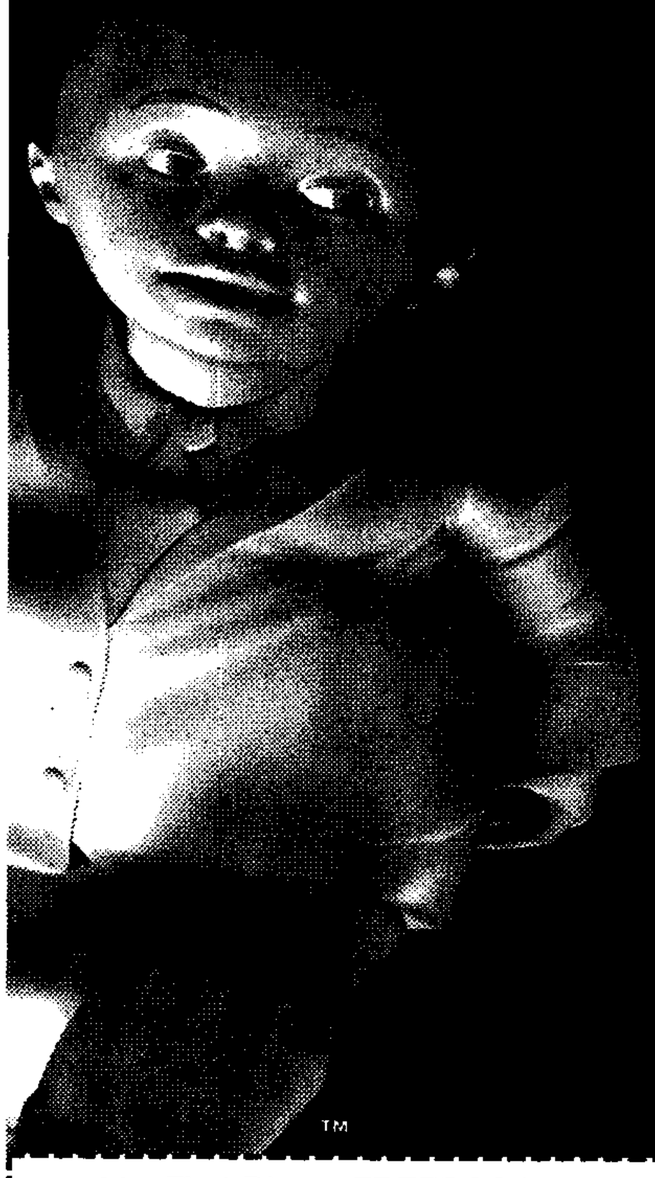

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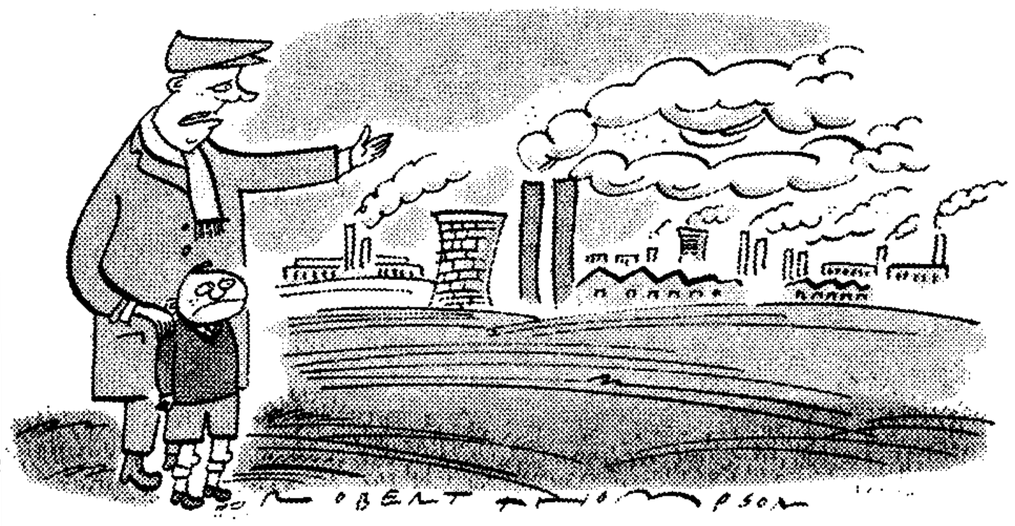

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THERE can be no doubt that the Government have been caught on the hop by the biggest crisis in their term of office.

And yet they totally failed to foresee the emergency that would bring the country to its knees in just a few hours.

Unlike us. All through the summer this newspaper has warned that disaster lay ahead and that popular unrest would explode in the autumn. The tell-tale signs were everywhere.

Look at these headlines which warned Tony Blair that the storm clouds were gathering:

"Where Has Our English Summer Gone?"

"Hats Off to the Queen Mother!"

"Liz Hurley Takes Off Clothes"

You didn't have to read between the lines to know that by late September the supermarket shelves would be empty of milk whilst motorists fought each other in the streets for a pint of unleaded bread.

What else did we have to do to spell it out to Mr Blair?

E. Strobes
Lord Dacre
The Daily Blackmail
High Street Kon.

"You can't come out until you've cut fuel tax"

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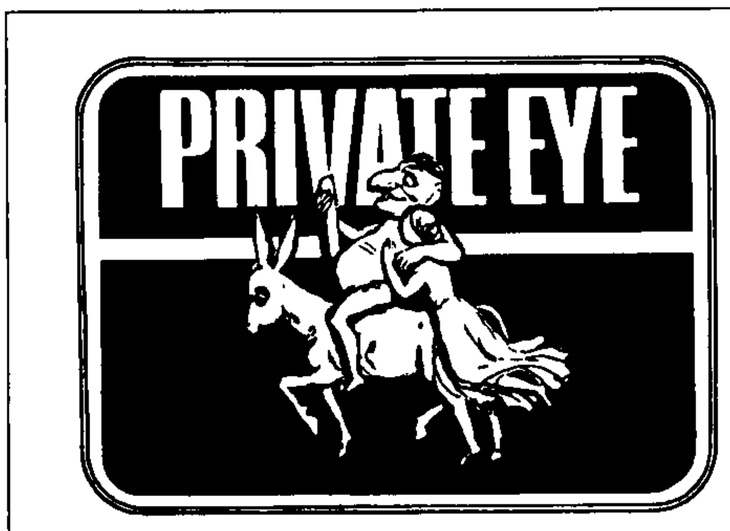

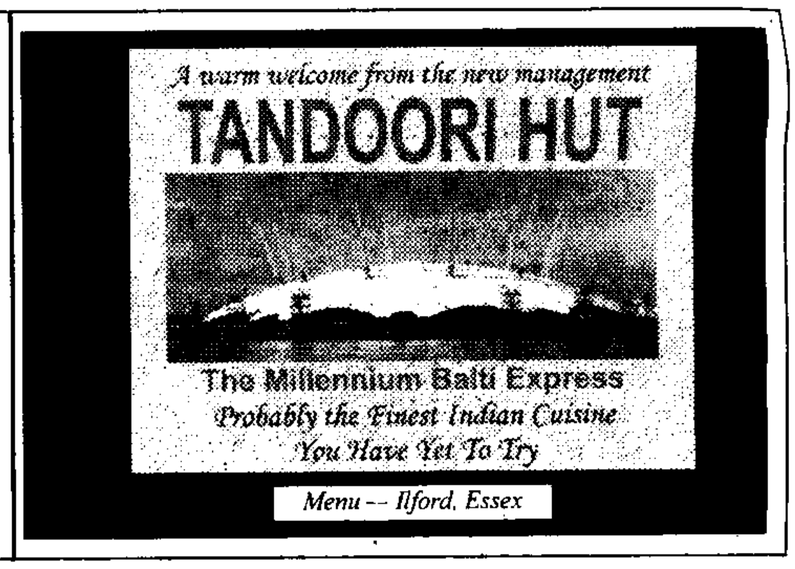
A warm welcome from the new management
TANDOORI HUT
The Millennium Balti Express
Probably the Finest Indian Cuisine You Have Yet To Try
Menu -- Ilford, Essex

TONY BLAIR may have a sense of humour after all. It's hard to think of any other reason for his eccentric decision to put forward John Prescott and transport minister Lord (Gus) Macdonald as the government's two main spokesmen during the fuel crisis.

"You can't go to a gate and try to bring the government down by blackmail," Macdonald told *Newsnight* last Wednesday. "That is not on, and that is not British." Can this by any chance be the former Trotskyist firebrand Gus Macdonald who at the tender age of 18 led a highly disruptive strike by Govan shipyard apprentices – and whose rabble-rousing skills were so highly regarded that his comrades then despatched him to London "to bring England out on strike"?

At least Macdonald seemed pretty relaxed in his new incarnation as a responsible, sober-suited chap deploring direct action. The deputy prime minister, by contrast, squirmed and blustered, particularly when he was challenged on his claim that it would be "crazy" for governments to yield to pickets and blockades.

And no wonder: perhaps he still remembered the summer of 1960, when a bolshie young activist called John Prescott joined the unofficial (and illegal) merchant seamen's strike which paralysed British ports for weeks. Or perhaps he was recalling the summer of 1966, when John Prescott and other militants in the National Union of Seamen helped to organise Britain's worst industrial stoppage since the general strike of 1926, and were roundly condemned by the prime minister, Harold Wilson.

Unabashed, Prescott wrote a famous pamphlet, *The Seamen's Reply*, which defended wildcat strikes as the only way of getting one's message across to, er, an out-of-touch Labour government.

WHO was the top BP executive slinking in to Downing Street during the petrol crisis to get a dressing down from the prime minister? None other than Nick Butler, one of the central props of "new" Labour.

A paragon of the Fabian Society, Butler became one of Peter Mandelson's closest buddies. He co-authored a book with Neil Kinnock at the time of 1987 general election, putting what can only be described as the Mandelson arguments for voting Labour. He was also a close collaborator with David (now Lord) Lipsey and former paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson in setting up the British America Project to forge close links between "new" Labour and the American Democrats (see *Eyes* 945, 960 and 963). Throughout his long association with new Labour, Butler has made much of his senior position in the oil industry. Some say he would be a government minister – if only he could afford it.

During the spat between Blair and the oil companies, the close links between new Labour and the industry as a whole have been studiously overlooked. No area of British industry has supplied more expertise and personnel to the Blair project than oil. The role of Lord Simon, former BP chairman, as government minister for Europe, has been well documented. But there are hundreds of other connections between government and top oil men.

When oil prices were dropping in 1998, Mandelson, then trade secretary, launched an oil price task force, crying: "I will not sit back and watch the decline of the UK oil and gas industry under the impact of a low world oil price". The task force, designed to "bring together government departments and the oil industry to develop mutual understanding", included the managing directors of Shell UK and of Texaco, the general manager of BP Exploration and other oil chiefs. "I do not believe such a powerful partnership has been formed before," said Mandy. ● *See Oiling Up Special* *8*

JONATHAN POWELL, Tony Blair's chief of staff, sent out a stern legal warning when he heard rumours that Julia Langdon's biography of Mo Mowlam, to be serialised in the *Mail on Sunday*, would name him as the man who briefed against St Mo.

As it turned out, no such allegation appeared in the serial extracts or the book itself; yet Powell is still threatening a libel suit against the *MoS* over an earlier article, published in May, in which Langdon described his involvement in the Dobson-for-Mayor fiasco.

His exotic sister-in-law, Lady (Carla) Powell, seems to be even more indignant than Jonathan himself. Encountering Julia Langdon at a *New Statesman* lunch recently, she yelled: "You have ruined my brother-in-law's career! You destroyed him!" Carla's argument, insofar as it could be discerned from the hysterical rants, was that since Langdon was a longstanding Labour supporter she had a journalistic duty not to write anything which might embarrass the party.

Can this be the same Carla Powell who in 1989 complained furiously to Conrad Black about the appointment of Julia Langdon as political editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*? In those days, of course, Carla's husband was right-hand man to Margaret Thatcher – and her argument to Black, insofar as it could be discerned from the hysterical rants, was that it would be outrageous to employ a Labour-supporting hackette such as Langdon, since she might write things which would embarrass the party.

"MY PARENTS always taught me to tell the truth," Richard Branson declared two years ago, after winning his libel battle against GTech boss Guy Snowden. "I do not lie. And I can't stand liars."

The old riddle about Cretans and mendacity comes to mind following the publication this week of Tom Bower's unauthorised biography, which reveals a number of occasions on which Beardie has shamelessly adjusted the truth.

One of the most sensational allegations concerns his 1988 scheme to turn the Virgin Group into a private company again, two years after its stock-market flotation. To buy back the shares he needed an outside investor, and he found one in the form of Japanese businessman Akira Ijichi who was persuaded to pay just over £94m for a 25 percent stake in the company – thus valuing it at £377 million. Two months later, Virgin's shareholders agreed to sell their shares back to Branson at a price which valued the group at £248m.

As Bower points out, had the shareholders known of Ijichi's agreement that Virgin Group was actually worth £377m (ie £129m more than they had been offered), they might have demanded a rather higher price. But neither they nor Virgin's two non-executive directors were informed of the Japanese deal.

In short, Bower is effectively accusing Branson of plotting to diddle his shareholders. It's hard to imagine a more damaging charge, particularly in the week when the high court was due to hold its judicial review of the lottery commissioners' decision to favour Branson over Camelot. At the very least, one might have expected an instant libel claim as soon as the story appeared in last Saturday's *Daily Mail*.

Not so. Instead, Beardie's lawyers merely rang the *Mail* to say that Sir Richard would write a letter to the editor "correcting" Bower on a few points once the serialisation had finished.

● *Fuel what a scorcher: Hackwatch* *7*
● *Couch Potato on Big Brother* *10*
● *Beatles Anthology Diary* *24*
● *Slicker on the Millennium Doom* *28*

NEWS

KEN LENINSPART's green credentials are well advertised: he takes the tube, he loves newts and he reminisces about chasing the Archway motorway inspector on to a roof.

Archway Motorway was one of very few road schemes stopped by protest. Another was the East London River Crossing/Oxleas Wood – which has since been romantically rebranded as Galleons' Reach and then re-rebranded as Thames Gateway Bridge. In February, at a pre-election meeting in South London, Red Ken was asked about Thames Gateway and the new Blackwall road crossing.

"New roads are not the answer," he replied. "There will be no new roads while I am mayor. It will happen over my dead body." Asked again about the Thames Gateway bridge, he added: "They would have to put me in the first block of concrete."

Or will they? At a meeting of the Greater London authority's "Transport for London" group (chairman: K. Livingstone) on 8 September, the mayor was reminded that thousands of people voted for him because of his pledge not to build Thames Gateway. "We have to build another bridge," he insisted. "Tower Bridge is falling down."

Actually it isn't. Besides, it doesn't take much traffic and it's six miles away from the Thames Gateway. But apparently any excuse will do to justify bulldozing through another urban motorway.

THE idea of government regulators was introduced as a sop for privatisation. A government official paid by taxpayers and responsible to them would supervise newly-privatised industries to make sure no one was ripped off by too high prices.

Irritated by these new regulators, however, the privatised utilities promptly set up new departments called things like "regulatory strategy" to supervise the government regulator and keep him at a proper distance. Now the utilities are finding that the best people to staff their new departments are… former government regulators.

David Reece, who was a director of corporate finance and economic affairs for the government water regulator Ofwat, has just landed a new job as head of regulatory strategy at Transco, the privatised pipeline sector of the old British Gas. His boss at Transco will be Chris Bolt, who until last year was the government's rail regulator.

POOR Pierre-Yves Gerbeau. It seems the millennium drain he has been lumbered with for most of this year is now affecting his social life.

M. Gerbil had been invited to a function at the British embassy at The Hague where he was to be guest of honour. Due to the farcical recent events in Greenwich, however, he has had to inform the embassy that he is unable to attend.

Following the appointment of David James at the helm of the sinking dome, "vital refinancing and restructuring" are required. As the star of the show was to be absent, the function was quickly cancelled.

Number crunchings

23%

percentage of electorate who bothered to register their vote in the European elections last year

73%

percentage of viewers who bothered to register their vote in the 'Big Brother' evictions last week

Street Of Shame

"DEEPLY DEPLORABLE: BETRAYAL OF DIANA," the *Mirror* thunders, condemning the "sheer greed" of her former aide Patrick Jephson. "He has no decency. If he did, he would not have betrayed Diana's trust so cruelly."

But Jephson isn't the only offender, as the *Mirror* helpfully reminds us by listing other "men who have let her down". These include health club owner Bryce Taylor, who "broke Diana's trust in 1993 after he sold sneak pictures of her working out".

Deeply deplorable indeed. And which newspaper paid the treacherous Taylor for his sneak pictures, thus rewarding his sheer greed? Oddly, the *Mirror* does not say.

Slim, modest

Fat, smug

JULIE BURCHILL's first column for the *News of the Screws* was, quite reasonably, devoted to slagging off dome chief Lord Falconer. "They say you get the face you deserve at 40… and smug, fat Falconer proves it."

Apart from the obvious irony in this opening gambit, however, the article is also proof that the new editor of the *Screws*, Rebekah Wade, has no intention whatever of sticking to the pledge made by her predecessor Phil Hall never to employ anyone who had taken cocaine (see *Eyes passim*).

Burchill's rant was a far cry from a piece she penned for the *Grauniad* just a few months earlier when she proudly claimed to have "put enough up her nostrils to stun the entire Columbian armed forces".

REALLY?

Paula Yates was a survivor.

— Guardian Obituary, 18 September

IN THE air-conditioned, teetotal world of modern newspapers, hacks at the *Observer* are striving valiantly to keep the spirit of Lunchtime O'Booze alive.

One evening recently, when the day's work was done, a posse of *Observer* hacks repaired to the Kolossi Grill, a Greek restaurant round the corner. Many bottles of retsina were duly emptied – whereupon comment editor Mike Holland suddenly took offence at something said by feature writer Euan Ferguson.

"Take that back!" Holland yelled furiously. But the fuddled Ferguson was in no position to do so, since he had no idea what he'd said. And so, as befits a senior executive on Britain's oldest liberal newspaper, Holland resorted to bare-knuckle techniques.

Ferguson reappeared in the office a couple of days later sporting two spectacular black eyes – looking, as one colleague observed admiringly, "like a panda with a hangover".

HIGH on the hysteria of the fuel crisis, early editions of the *Guardian* on Thursday 14 September featured a cartoon by Steve Bell depicting disgruntled truckers and bearing the charming slogan "Fuck more hedgehogs".

Grauniad subs soon regained their heads and, fearing a deluge of complaints from animal rights activists, toned down later editions to "F— more hedgehogs".

REVIEWING rival music critic Norman Lebrecht's new book on the history of the Royal Opera in the latest *Sunday Telegraph* Review, Michael Kennedy wonders if it will appeal to anyone but opera buffs. If this is not enough to frighten off would-be readers, he rounds off by warning that the book is littered with errors – "proof-reading has been slack". Tut tut.

Four pages earlier we read Kennedy's musings on last week's revival of *Tosca* at Covent Garden, in which he knowledgeably informs us that the production was first mounted in 1974, as a vehicle for Maria Callas. What is probably the most frequently performed and famous production ever at Covent Garden was of course first presented in 1964. Maria Callas last performed in an opera in 1965.

ARE YOU THE BEST SUB YOU KNOW?

If the answer is yes, and you are seeking a new outlet for your perfect prose and fercious exactitude, Sunday Express Magazine could have the ideal jon for you.

Grauniad

LAST Thursday's *Express* carried a full-page questionnaire. "To better understand how your working life has changed, we would be grateful if you could complete and return the following survey," the paper pleaded, offering entry to a prize draw as an incentive.

The 31 questions asked whether readers felt "secure in your job" or "undervalued", and how hard it was to balance home and work. Curiously, however, there was no mention of the government's effect on the workplace, nor a space to add personal observations. Thus no treasonable sentiments could be expressed about, for instance, "new" Labour's tax policies and their effect on the job satisfaction of farmers, hauliers, cab-drivers etc.

Just as well, really. For the survey wasn't simply a ruse to gain names and addresses for "carefully selected" junk-mailers (though it was that as well). It was organised by the paper's "strategic research" department, which is run by none other than the prime minister's focus-group guru Philip Gould.

SADLY the *Eye* underestimated its favourite "non-paparazzo" Jason Fraser when we suggested in our last issue that he had erred from his mission to take pics of celebs in a flattering light by selling a snapshot of Liz Hurley's cellulite to the *Mirror*.

In fact Fraser, whose name appeared alongside a pair of pics of la Hurley, was only responsible for one of them – a frontal pose – while the unsightly bum shot belonged to picture agency Matrix.

Credit is due to Fraser, however, for the tasteful and highly flattering impromptu pics of Iggy Pop and his busty girlfriend which appeared in one tabloid and then were sold on to that immensely tasteful publication, *Mayfair*.

RIP Chic Jacob, Eye cartoonist, 1926-2000

WINNIE the POUJADISTE

MYSTERY STORY

READERS of the *Sunday Times* have been perplexed for several months by a series of articles, usually by Liam Clarke, about the alleged role of the security services in Northern Ireland in the assassinations of republicans, including the murder at his home in 1989 of the solicitor Pat Finucane.

Clarke's articles, the most recent of which was published on 10 September, report two Metropolitan police inquiries which, he suggests, contradict themselves.

The first is headed by John Stevens, now the most senior policeman in England. It is conducted by Commander Hugh Orde and DCI Rick Turner of the Met. This inquiry, says Clarke, is on the verge of arresting "dozens" of former members of a special army squad called the Force Research Unit (FRU). These include the military attaché at the British embassy in Beijing, Gordon Kerr. The arrests, says Clarke, will lead to interviews about assassinations in Northern Ireland including that of Finucane.

One reason John Stevens is so concerned about the results of these inquiries is that they aim to find out who was responsible for the burning down of a police building in Belfast which acted as headquarters for a police investigation into Finucane's murder. The man in charge of that inquiry, who has been determined ever since to seek out and prosecute the arsonists, was John Stevens.

Simultaneously Clarke reveals that another Met investigation, prompted by the Ministry of Defence, is set on prosecuting Clarke and his supposed informants under the official secrets act. This investigation has already issued "gagging orders" against the *Sunday Times* preventing publication of information about the FRU.

It is hard for readers to make their way through this maze of apparently contradictory investigations without understanding its origin: the long-standing feud between the RUC and the army in Northern Ireland. The feud dates back to the inquiries in the 1980s by the then Manchester assistant chief constable John Stalker into the shoot-to-kill policy of the police in Northern Ireland. Though Stalker was removed before he could publish the results of his investigations, his inquiry was deeply damaging to the RUC, which responded not just by smearing Stalker but by launching allegations against army intelligence.

Stalker's demise was followed closely by the outing of Brian Nelson, an army agent in the Ulster Defence Association, who was engaged in secretly buying arms for the paramilitaries in South Africa. Nelson was exposed as a tit for tat for the embarrassment caused to the RUC by Stalker.

Ever since, both wings of the security services – police and army – have systematically leaked each other's secrets and exposed each other's agents as they compete for the role of intelligence gathering and peace-keeping in Northern Ireland. This is how Liam Clarke, who has excellent sources in the RUC, comes to know so much about (and even obtains a picture of) the army's Force Research Unit, and why the Ministry of Defence is so determined to stop him and his newspaper in their tracks.

BISHOP of LANCASTER AND OTHER HISTORICAL ARTEFACTS AT ST MICHAEL'S-on-WYRE CHURCH

Press Release, St Michael's-on-Wyre

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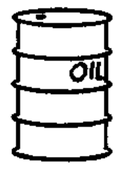


Running On Empty

MINISTERS may have been embarrassed by last week's fuel blockade – but not half as embarrassed as certain editors, who have had to eat so many of their words that they are now suffering from severe indigestion.

The *Mirror* made its position clear on Friday 8 September, with an editorial attacking French farmers and lorry-drivers who had brought their country to a halt. "What they are doing is simply not right," it wailed. "Not just because it affects many British firms and holidaymakers but because brute force is no way to try to sort things out." One expects nothing less from Johnny Frog, of course: "Not only do the French have a history of causing mayhem when they have a grievance, but their government always caves in, making the next bout of aggro inevitable." In Britain, however, "we have not taken to the streets and we won't. We're not like that."

Whoops! By the next morning Britain was just like that. But the *Mirror* stood firm. "Gordon Brown didn't get his reputation as the Iron Chancellor for nothing," it opined on 9 September. "He does what he thinks is right. No amount of pleading, shouting or bullying will sway him. So it is not sensible to blockade petrol supplies in an attempt to get him to lower taxes. In case the protesters haven't noticed, he is not a French minister."

For some reason the pickets ignored this advice. And by Tuesday 12 September the *Mirror* had suddenly become the Paper That Supports Our Protesters. "I'M ALL RIGHT JAG," its front-page headline sneered, above a photo of the PM's official car. "Blair Snubs Fuel Campaign... But It Doesn't Affect Him, Does It?" An indignant editorial demanded that Brown should cave in – apparently forgetting its own warning that this would make further aggro inevitable.

On 13 September mugshots of Messrs Brown, Blair and Prescott formed a rogues' gallery on the front page. "EMPTY. These three men run the country. Today, the country will run dry. None of them knows quite how to get it going again... but they all agree it's not their fault." Blair was denounced as a "fool" for not capitulating. ("It is not a sign of weakness to react to strong public feelings. That is democracy.") And he had been criminally negligent in ignoring the warning signs: the protest "has happened quickly, but not that quickly. It was possible to see this coming last week." Except for *Mirror* readers, of course, who had been assured only five days earlier that there would be no British blockades because "we're not like that".

Amazingly enough the *Mirror* still had enough petrol in its tank to execute yet another U-turn. Having supported the protesters on Tuesday and Wednesday, on Thursday the paper claimed they were "reminiscent of the worst kind of union behaviour... The pickets and blockades have to go. Now. The country cannot be held to ransom." By Friday, Tony "I'm all right Jag" Blair was praised for the very stubbornness which the *Mirror* had previously deplored: "He has been a strong and tough leader against the threat of anarchy. He has shown he will not cave in."

As a pro-government paper the *Mirror* was always bound to get itself into a pickle over this dispute. As an unrelentingly anti-government paper, the *Daily Mail* should have had no qualms. Except, of course, that its loathing of Labour is equalled only by its terror of civil unrest – and its francophobia.

On 31 August, when French fishermen blockaded Channel ports, the *Mail* savaged their "smug" and "diminutive" leader, Jose Huleux ("MONSIEUR MISERY"), who showed "not a shred of sympathy" for the motorists affected by his action. "The militants are tearing up the rules because they know they can get away with it," it raged. "They always have... Welcome to the brave new world of European free trade."

A day later, when the blockade was lifted, it attacked Lionel Jospin, who had "cravenly caved in". The fishermen "have taken on their government and won hands down. And of course every victory simply encourages more militancy." What the French government should have done was send in the police to smash the protest. On 2 September, the news that French taxi-drivers and farmers were striking against fuel prices was reported under the headline: "More French Bully-Boys Follow Fishermen's Lead".

No wonder the *Mail* was so alarmed when British farmers and hauliers threatened something similar. "Must this country succumb to the epidemic of bloody-minded militancy that has plunged France into chaos?" it asked despairingly on 9 September. "This campaign is misguided and dangerous.

A France which has had a tradition of revolt and street insurrection since the Revolution of 1789 and where governments live in fear of being toppled by the mob offers no lessons to a grown-up parliamentary democracy where there is every opportunity for peaceful and legal dissent without inflicting misery on innocent bystanders... It would be a sad day for Britain if governments were held to ransom." The demonstrators would "do themselves no credit" if they brought the country to a halt. "They should now leave their cause to the normal processes of democracy."

On 11 September, as the protests spread, the *Mail* still had no sympathy: "Only fools would wish to return to the 70s when militants extorted concessions from spineless governments."

The very next day, the *Mail* came up with its own solution to the crisis: Tony Blair's spineless government should, er, offer concessions to the militants. "We understand the anger that has driven normally law-abiding people to such drastic action... What has happened is a direct consequence of a cynical, arrogant government losing touch with the electorate." It also warned Blair not to use the police to break the picket-lines – a message reinforced in an apocalyptic article by Frederick Forsyth: "If you turn British coppers against British truckers, Mr Blair, you will have brought our country to a low I hoped never to see." Clearly both he and the editor had already forgotten the thunderous editorial of 1 September which condemned Lionel Jospin as a craven appeaser for not sending in *les gendarmes*.

Having previously warned that protesters would "do themselves no credit" if they cut off fuel supplies, the *Mail* discovered that about 90 percent of the population supported them – including its own pundits such as Leo McKinstry and Lynda Lee-Potter ("Why We Should All Back the Blockade"). This may explain why phrases such as "bully-boys", "bloody-minded militancy" and "Mister Misery" were conspicuously absent from its coverage last week. Instead, a gushing two-page spread on Wednesday 13 September hailed the protest as "A Very British Blockade". Two days later, the flying pickets who had brought the country to a standstill were said by the *Mail* to embody "the best and deepest instincts of the British people".

Could they by any chance be related to the British protesters who had been denounced, only one week earlier, as "misguided and dangerous"?

O·B·N

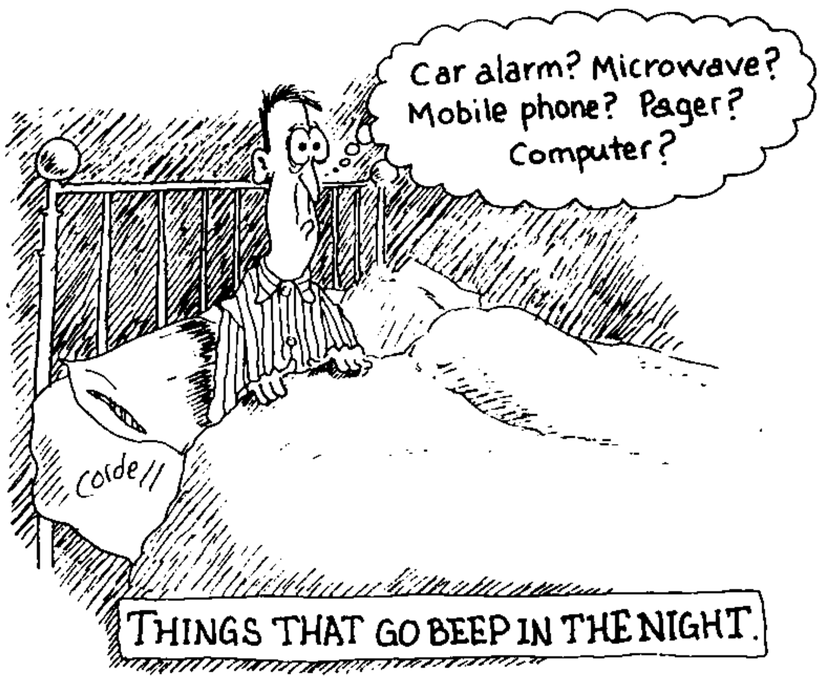
Guy talked about his No1 son to the No1 Sun – and admitted it is his favourite paper: "I don't read any other papers. I love The Sun.

"I think it's the best paper in the world. The Sun has a sense of moral responsibility. It seems to back Britain in all the right places without getting up its own a**e doing so."

GUY RITCHIE
Sun

Nominated by Francis Harvey.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.



"I BELIEVE that whatever the rights and wrongs of the argument over fuel duty we cannot accept – as a government or as a nation – that policy should be dictated by illegal blockades, pickets or direct action," Tony Blair announced last week.

Only one day earlier, however, home secretary Jack Straw had held a meeting with Sarah Payne's parents and Rebekah Wade, editor of the *News of the Screws*, to inform them that the sex offenders' act would be changed. Wade emerged looking mighty pleased with herself – as well she might, since Straw's U-turn was largely prompted by her naming-and-shaming campaign.

(Despite Straw's insistence that he can't condone lawbreaking, it is also noticeable that neither Wade nor anyone from the *Screws*-inspired lynch mobs has yet been charged under the protection from harassment act 1997, which made it a criminal offence to "pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another".)

If only fuel-tax campaigners had "named and shamed" treasury officials and published their home addresses, and the civil servants had then been attacked, threatened and burned out, no doubt the protesters would have been invited to meet ministers and promised a tax-reduction without delay.

LABOUR conference delegates in Brighton will be sad to hear that business backing for the party is down on last year, but will be heartened to learn that the old "new" Labour favourites are still stumping up.

Among contributors of "£5,000 or more" are Andersen Consulting, which was let off paying back much more than £5,000 for its continuing cock-up of the national insurance computer system (see *Eyes passim*); Ernst & Young, which has so many government contracts for helping out the unemployed; British Aerospace, the arms giant; and even McDonald's, the burger people whose board includes such well-known Labour luminaries as, er, Margaret Thatcher's former press officer and her former election agent.

The party is boasting that Brighton will see "the world's largest exhibition attached to a political conference" – and the exhibitors are in interesting bunch.

Sponsors include long-standing opponents of the Labour government like the Countryside Alliance and Camelot (whose main role in government now appears to be taking the lottery commission to court). The modest stand of the Campaign against the Arms Trade, meanwhile, is dwarfed by dramatic displays from the arms industry, chiefly British Aerospace (BAe) and Thomson CSF. BAe is also sponsoring a question and answer session with employment ministers on conference Monday.

Rail safety can be discussed direct with the many private transport corporations at conference. Railtrack is at stand E138; First Group, which runs Great Western Trains at E143 and E144; and Amey, which maintains track and signalling around Paddington, is at stand 60. There are stands too for Connex, Arriva and the Association of Train Operating companies.

IN August Lib Dem MP Norman Baker and his partner were invited to the Proms by the BBC's head of external affairs Michael Hastings. Three weeks before the event Baker called Hastings to check whether they could bring along their new-born daughter. He was told they could and accordingly on the night they turned up with a sleeping baby in tow.

No sooner had they arrived, however, than Proms director Nicholas Kenyon arrived on the scene demanding that the couple and child be ejected from the hospitality box immediately. Kenyon pulled off the PR coup of throwing out the Liberal Democrats' broadcasting spokesman.

WHEN Peter Mandelson had to resign over his home-loan from Geoffrey Robinson, so did his boyish sidekick Benjamin "Oofy" Wegg-Prosser. And although Mandy has since clambered back on to the greasy pole, poor little Oofy is still looking for a new career.

A spell as special assistant to *Sun* editor David Yelland ended after only a few weeks; more recently, he has been looking at "internet ventures". Alas, they can't be all that promising: Oofy has now contacted his old nemesis, Geoffrey Robinson, to ask if there's any chance of a job on the *New Statesman*.

Robinson is, of course, about to publish his memoirs, including a lengthy account of the home-loan affair which is sure to embarrass the Northern Ireland secretary. So how will Mandy react when he learns that his former *protégé* is now consorting with the enemy?

DAVID BLUNKETT has found a perfect replacement for Sir Peter Davis as chairman of the government's New Deal task force whose main purpose is to move people from welfare into work.

As the *Eye* has pointed out, Davis was especially well qualified for the job because of a) his record as chairman of Reed for moving people from work to welfare; and b) his association as chairman of the Pru with the mis-selling pensions scandal. Could Blunkett find anyone half as qualified? Yes, he could.

Step forward Sandy Leitch, chief executive of Zurich Financial Services and former managing director and chief executive of Allied Dunbar.

A government press release contains a moving passage about Leitch's father dying when Sandy was two years old, and says: "His formative years were instrumental in the development of the core personal values, compassion, integrity and a strong work ethic." Curiously there is little reference to Allied Dunbar's heavy involvement in the pensions mis-selling scandal while Leitch was at the helm, nor to the recent restructuring at Zurich Financial Services which has resulted in a huge flow of employees trudging the arid road from work to, er, welfare.

Leitch does have a third qualification for the New Deal job. As Labour's latest accounts reveal, Zurich Financial spent "£5,000 or more" on tickets for dinners with Labour and another "£5,000 or more" on sponsoring the party.

Number crunchings

57 percentage increase in motoring costs, allowing for inflation, since 1990

57 percentage of people who think "Stealth Taxes" are wrong

57 percentage of petrol stations open again by Monday, when there were...

57 days to go to the deadline set by protestors

OILING UP TO NEW LABOUR

THE unhealthy relationship between the New Labour government and the oil industry has been demonstrated by the fact that nearly all government departments have made oil appointments, some quite perverse. The oil industry even dominated Labour's green groups. As recently as July Tony Blair appointed Shell chairman Mark Moody-Stuart to chair the Renewable Energy Task Force because of his "valuable business expertise" and "interest in promoting renewable technology".

In April last year environment secretary Michael Meacher was "delighted" to appoint Chris Fay, retiring chairman of Shell, as chairman of the Advisory Committee on Business in the Environment, saying his firm was a "pioneer in embracing the sustainability challenge".

Meacher also made Jyoti Munsiff, Shell's company secretary, a member of the Sustainable Development Education Panel. The link between the oil industry and renewable energy or "green" issues isn't that obvious – unless the failure to deliver petrol was all just a fit of greenness.

OIL executives infest the education department, too. This June David Blunkett announced that Bryan Sanderson, BP's group managing director, "meant business" as the new chair of the Learning and Skills Council in charge of adult education. Blunkett said the appointment was "at the heart of our agenda to create a prosperous and inclusive society". Sanderson had already been reappointed on the Industrial Development Advisory Board, a body intended to help firms in the regions (the same firms losing hand over fist through lost production in the current crisis).

Last January Blunkett put Stella Earnshaw, an outgoing regional finance head of Shell, back on the Funding Agency for Schools. The government's "education action zones" put Shell in charge of "bringing radical ways of working" into schools in Lambeth, south London. The South West Essex Business and Education Partnership gives BP a similar role in schools. Education minister Estelle Morris was excited to address Esso's "numeracy conference" last May, while a month later home office minister Charles Clarke launched a schools pack made by Esso and other firms designed to "help young people understand the responsibilities of businesses within the community". After recent events, even ministers must be wondering if the oil firms really are the best to teach "good citizenship".

BLAIR of course wanted to call in the army to sort out the tanker problems. But when George Robertson was defence secretary he had already appointed ex-Shell executive John Hastie and former BP head John Morgan to sort out the army. He made Hastie and Morgan chairman and member of the Oil and Pipelines Agency, which overseas the MoD's bulk fuel transportation. Any conflict there?

The NHS, on red alert through the petrol crisis, is no stranger to oil industry ways either. The Public Services Productivity Council was pulled together by Labour in 1998 to let business people lecture the public sector on how to "deliver improvements in productivity, efficiency and the quality of services". This July the panel was telling the NHS how to "maximise value for money" in the NHS. A key member of the panel? One Bryan Grote, executive vice president of BP.

Back in May, Grote reported the results of a "BP Amoco Pilot in the department of trade and industry". Incredibly, BP managers had been let into the energy group of the DTI. These are the same civil servants who have responsibility for the oil industry and are, presumably, coming up with new plans to keep the industry on the straight and narrow in future disputes.

No wonder Blair was so angry when so many of his "friends" let him down.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Guess what? One individual has been strangely removed from publicity advertising a meeting at the forthcoming Labour party conference.

Step forward Ken Livingstone who is to be the opening speaker at a major fringe meeting on the Sunday morning in Brighton. Yet officials in Labour's Millbank HQ have removed his name from the conference guide, such is their hatred for the newt-fancier.

Do we really want the country to be run by a small self-interested group who are only concerned with protecting their own jobs, like...er...?

HOW LABOUR WORKS, PT 94...

HEARING that Tony Benn had announced his retirement at the next election to devote "more time to politics", the former arch-Bennite turned fragrant Blairite Harriet Harman wrote to the old trouper.

"Do you not agree that there need to be more women in Parliament?" inquired Harpie. The niceties over, the former social security minister suggested that her former assistant Liz Kendall would make "an excellent Member of Parliament".

Though Benn had made a point of keeping out of the race for his successor in Chesterfield, he was goaded by the Harpie's letter to reply. He agreed that while there needed to be more women in parliament, perhaps she – Harman – might tell him which woman she had backed for London mayor (knowing full well she had dutifully voted for Frank Dobson and not Glenda Jackson).

In fact, regional party officials had long before decided that Chesterfield Labour party would not be allowed to select the lefty Benn's successor – unless they and Millbank approved the choice.

Shortly after Benn announced his decision to step down in the summer of 1999, the regional director of the East Midlands Labour party, Roy Kennedy, holidayed in America with the party's general secretary, Margaret McDonagh, and friends.

Kennedy and McDonagh were anxious to ensure that Benn's successor would not be another Benn-like leftwinger. So instead of returning to set the wheels in motion for Chesterfield Labour party to select a new candidate, nothing was to happen – courtesy of Kennedy and his team – for more than six months. Letters from local members attempting to find out about the selection procedure were unanswered. Instead, they were given the impression that if they went for an off-message candidate the local party might be disbanded altogether.

By 29 April this year, when delegates finally assembled for a candidate short-listing meeting, regional officers believed they had found the perfect alibi for handing the whole process to Millbank. A row over delegate credentials enabled Kennedy and the Labour party's constitutional officer, Eric Wilson, to recommend to the party's ruling NEC that for the first time ever a special by-elections committee oversee the selection.

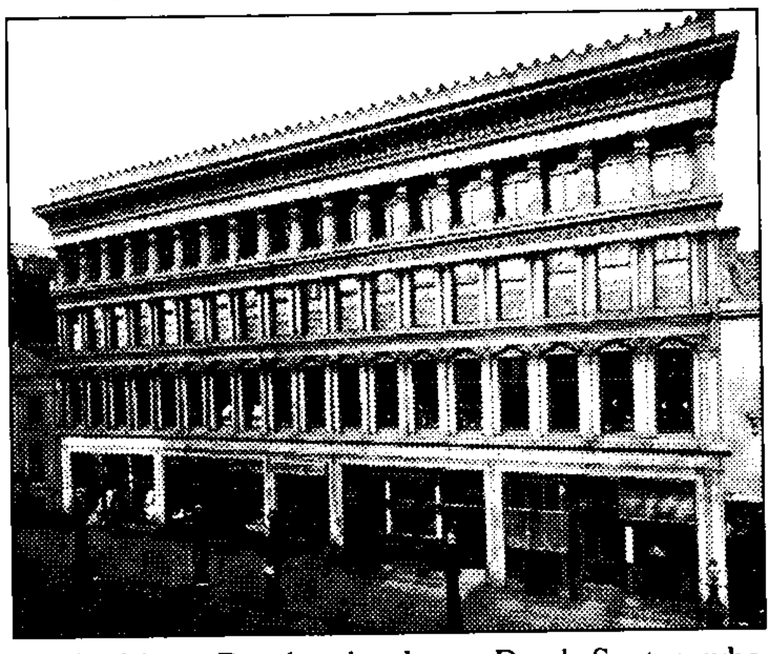
Then, on Sunday 17 September candidates were invited to appear before the by-election committee in Nottingham. Committee member Clive Soley MP asked each if they "agreed with the selection process", before any decision could be made. A final shortlist was produced with only two elected members of the NEC present, Soley and local government rep Sally Powell. The shortlist consisted of, surprise, surprise, Liz Kendall; the former Wood Green MP and one-time Bennattollah disciple, Reg Race, whose qualifications include his prominent role three years ago in pushing for local MEP Ken Coates to be kicked out of the Labour party for disloyalty; and two other local male candidates who don't have a chance. Having succeeded in blocking any resurgent Bennery in this high profile seat, Labour officials are cock a hoop. Not only did they succeed in keeping popular union official Helen Seaforth off the shortlist (she had managed five local branch and union nominations), they believe that the male candidates will cancel each other out – leaving Kendall as the winner. The deal hatched between Harriet Harman and Clive Soley is set to produce the "right" result.

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE Egyptian Halls in Glasgow has appeared in this column before. Built in 1870-72 and designed by a great architect, Alexander "Greek" Thomson, it is an exotic and extraordinary commercial block, inventive and yet practical.

A contemporary journal could even claim that "we doubt if its equal, for originality, grandeur of treatment, or imposing effect, could be found in any city, not excepting the metropolis itself." Needless to say, therefore, in recent years Egyptian Halls has been neglected, its survival threatened by decay and multiple ownership.

Since its last appearance (*Eye* 950), however, things have improved. For once the city council did the right thing and started compulsory purchase proceedings against the delinquent owner of the upper floors. Now, after legal wrangles, majority ownership has been



acquired by a Dundee developer, Derek Soutar, who has commissioned an admirable conservation report from good engineers and architects.

The resulting proposals for a conservative restoration of the whole structure — including the remarkable iron-framed interior — and putting it back into commercial use has the backing of Historic Scotland. But it is at this point, when the future of this building seems reasonably hopeful for the first time in decades, that Scottish Enterprise Glasgow has chosen to pull the plug and renege on a promise to give £250,000 in grant aid of public money.

It claims that to help this project "is not a priority... in terms of the Operating Plan 2000/2001" and "does not fit with any of the priorities for Scottish Enterprise National". Yet three years ago, when called the Glasgow Development Agency, this enterprise company, doling out public money from its plush city-centre offices, was prepared to support a more destructive rehabilitation scheme in the typical Glagow *macho* style. Indeed, it attempted to blackmail bodies like Historic Scotland into accepting a potentially destructive stone-cleaning of Thomson's extraordinary facade. Image is everything for the agency's sharp-suited spivs, after all, not long-term sustainability.

This decision seriously undermines the attempt to rescue this much-abused building. Yet if the rehabilitation and commercial use of a largely empty city-centre urban masterpiece by one of the two architects of international stature for which poor old Glasgow is famous is not to be regarded as of economic benefit to the city — as opposed to out-of-town American-style hypermarkets and business parks — then what on earth could be?

Would the agency now help with the restoration of a commercial building by Mackintosh? After all, one of the aims of Scottish Enterprise Glasgow is meant to be the "development, redevelopment and improvement of the environment". Are they hypocrites or fools — or are these flash executives just reflecting the modern Glasgow culture of loathing good architecture and old buildings?

MY ATTENTION has been drawn, as they say, to the new "authorised" biography of the late Sir Hugh Casson by José Manser in which this column's relentless persecution of that cuddly exemplar of English charm and shabby chic is condemned.

My criticisms of Casson & Conder's Ismaeli Centre in South Kensington in 1982 (Eye 549) are even described as "bordering on racist in their venom". What I did, in fact, was to wonder how the Aga Khan, the plutocratic leader of a Muslim sect, should have so effortlessly acquired a site opposite the Victoria & Albert Museum once dedicated to the British people and intended for the National Theatre. I also suggested it was a mediocre, cliché-ridden design which, therefore, deserved the very first Sir Hugh Casson Medal. Was I wrong?

Perhaps Mrs Manser too much identifies her hero with her husband Michael who, as president of the RIBA and a knee-jerk modernist, has also been mentioned in this column. In her book, she declines to suggest any reasons for my "nastiness" towards Casson.

For the record, as I am "ever ready to be offensive", it was not just because I am repelled by charm masquerading as genius or public-spirited concern, but because Casson was shameless in the prostitution of his talents and connections. He used his status as a vice-chairman of the Victorian Society to oppose (for a fat fee) that society and others fighting at public inquiries for the preservation of, say, the Norman Shaw houses in Queen's Gate, Hounslow Town Hall and Liverpool Street Station. Later, he used his legendary charm to bugger up that great Elizabethan house, Sutton Place, without listed building consent.

De mortuis nil nisi bonum? Dear Sir Hugh "suffered with stoicism the abuse which was hurled at him" but I am told that being made a joke-figure in the Eye greatly hurt him towards the end of his life. Well, I cannot pretend that I am sorry. He also did much harm to the great city of Bath with the wretched "Casson mansard" roof, but I will admit that earlier in life, over the Festival of Britain, he did good things — which is more than can be said for his avid successors as public inquiry tarts, such as A. Blee.

'Piloti'

SPOOKS AND SPOOKMEN

EVEN though MI5 knew all about "Eckhart", the East German spy at Chatham House who for years fed intelligence to the Stasi, it decided, à la Melita Norwood, to do nothing about this treachery. What a bizarre contrast with the way the government is continuing to squander huge sums of taxpayers' money to buttress ludicrous official secrets act (OSA) charges against a former British army colonel, Nigel Wylde.

Wylde is due to stand trial later this year accused of being the source for a few pages in Tony Geraghty's book *The Irish War*, which the ministry of defence (MoD) claims damage national security (see *Eyes passim*).

Until last December Geraghty himself faced the prospect of an Old Bailey trial and a possible two years in jail for breaching the official secrets act. But after the *New York Times* compared the Blair government's treatment of Geraghty to that of the authoritarian regimes of China and Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore, the sensible attorney general Lord Williams dropped the case.

Meanwhile, Modplod, the ministry of defence police, has been spending a fortune going to foreign parts, including Kosovo, to reinterview "experts" – some several times – to bolster its case against Wylde.

In the meantime, and to the despair of the MoD, the book – complete with "offending" pages – is out in paperback. However, by interrogating and threatening senior staff at publisher HarperCollins, the MoD did manage to delay publication for a year. HarperCollins only felt confident to release it after charges against Geraghty were dropped. No doubt the *Spycatcher* effect will soon kick in, publicity generated by the government's action assuring greater sales.

Wylde is somewhat reassured that his trial under the all-embracing section two of the OSA comes *after* the introduction of human rights legislation, which guarantees the right to a fair trial. It is already widely accepted that section two wrongly reverses the burden of proof from prosecution to defence. If only Wylde were East German with mates in the Stasi, he wouldn't have the prospect of a court case hanging over him.

EYE TV

Big Brother (C4)

AND so it was Craig, musclebound Scouser and unwitting gay icon. Famed for saying "Eh!" at all times of day and night when non-Scousers would just have breathed, the 28-year-old Craig narrowly beat Anna, lesbian non-nun and sister-in-law of a loony right-wing *Sunday Telegraph* columnist, to the cherished £70,000.

The nation cried, the nation laughed, the nation wondered what Davina McCall was supposed to be wearing. Previously ejected *Big Brother* housemates were called back for a final encore, while vast crowds of onlookers yelled and hollered in drug-crazed abandon. Darren's children cried. Nasty Nick glowered, his transformation to panto villain now complete. All thoughts of fuel crises were momentarily forgotten. And in Horseferry Road, SW1, Channel 4 executives began to sweat at the thought of the huge sums they would have to fork out for the rights to the next series.

At the end, after hundreds of hours of airtime and millions of column inches, there is only a sense of grievous loss for the programme's dedicated audience, although this is counteracted by the grievous profit about to be made by everyone who took part.

When even the egregious, cackling "Caggy" is "inundated with offers" (© Daily Hellograph), you know something has gone severely wrong with the world. The true price of *Big Brother*'s success, though, will not be the fleeting celebrity of its participants but the innumerable *Big Brother*-type shows that will follow in its wake. None will have the same impact; indeed, even *BB* series two seems bound to disappoint. There's simply too much to live up to.

Big Brother was a clever idea, skilfully executed. Viewers quickly became accustomed to the show's timetable: on Monday, the hour-long weekend update, with added droning psychologists; on Tuesday, the house voting on who would be nominated this week; on Wednesday, the house told who had been nominated this week; on Thursday, the week's challenge (most people's night off, if necessary); and on Friday, the result of the vote and the ritualistic ejection.

It all seemed simple enough, but so does everything that works. The week's challenge was added by the British producers to stop things flagging too badly in between ejections, and it did its job. In the US people have only been thrown out every two weeks — a blatant ploy designed to stretch the whole process to a full 20-week US season and so maximise advertising revenue. It has failed hopelessly: the show is boring and no one watches it. So all credit to Bazal, which made as good a job of this as it made a pig's ear of its other main summer commission, BBC1's incomprehensible and dull quiz *The Syndicate*.

"Until we come up with a format to rival Big Brother – one person gets axed every week"

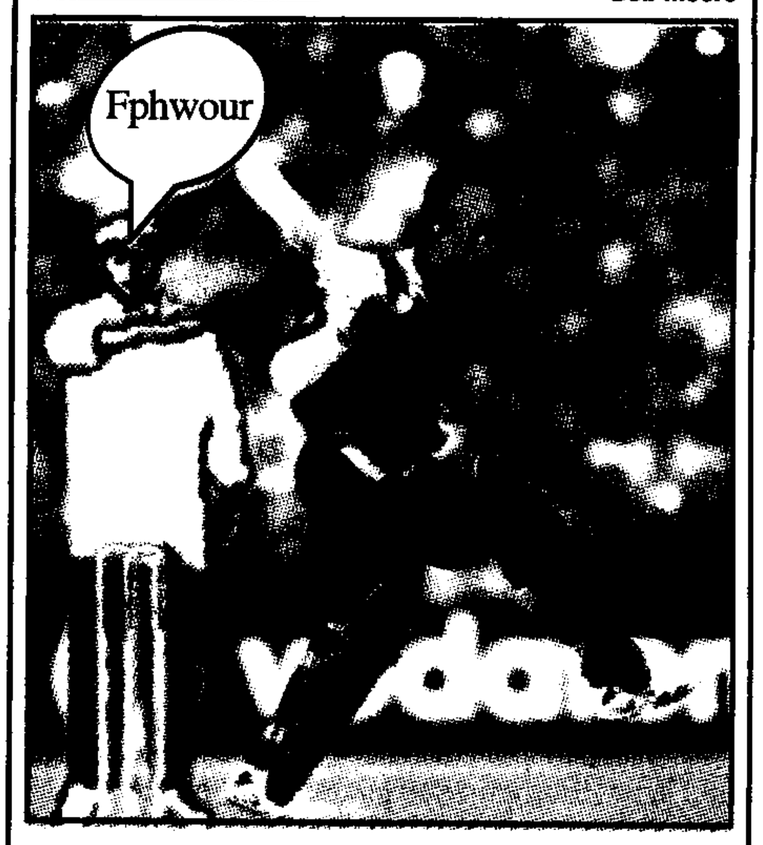
There remains the problem of the ghastliness of the contestants. The image of baldy Nichola constantly auditioning for the camera will be seared into many a viewer's memory. In week two the now forgotten Andy boasted of his New Year's Eve threesome with a married couple, and so ensured his demise. Simon Hoggart has memorably described them as "extrovert bores", and indeed, if only extroverts ran things, this is the way life would be. Most of the 10 seemed to have the self-awareness of bluebottles. The gurning, hyperactive Davina McCall was therefore an inspired choice to host the programme. You wouldn't want to spend more than 10 minutes in the same room as her either.

Lessons to be learned? For the programme makers, few they hadn't worked out already. All the most watchable bores will be ejected first, leaving the dullest three at the end to fight for first prize. For potential contestants, that there's no such thing as dignity if you take part in this programme, now or for the rest of your life. (But if you've got big knockers, you might sign a deal with Playtex.) For those who did take part, that people don't like (in order of ejection) dippy hippies, boastful marketing men, ageing Birmingham telephonists, slimy City operators, naked baldy exhibitionists, dreary Irishmen with no conversation, dim florists from Buckinghamshire, compulsive masseuses who don't like dim florists from Buckinghamshire, anyone called Darren, or even lesbian non-nuns. No, while there are gay men to swing the vote, the "chirpy bricklayer" (© Daily Hellograph) will win every time. "Eh! Eh! Eh! Orright?" Although he'll now have to be very careful which pubs he goes into...

'Couch Potato'

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Brian Lara Croft

AD NAUSEAM

THE agency responsible for the NEW M&S ads – the snappily-titled Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/Y&R – has wasted no opportunity to hype its Size 16, big-boned babe creation as a groundbreaking great leap forward. This has included sending pre-release tapes to the fashionistas and stressing that featuring a girl on the chubby side of slim heralds some kind of revolution.

But no wonder Rainey Kelly is so excited. It is a young company which was a highly regarded creative hotshop before its recent merger with multinational monolith Young & Rubicam. The M&S work is an interesting confluence – a beleaguered retailer which will try anything for a sniff of former glories, matched with an agency freshly promoted to adland's premier league. Rainey Kelly is desperate to prove it can cut it with the big boys, which means no more funny gags or brilliant vignettes and instead some "branding" – brainless, anodyne tosh that washes over the public mind like watery broth.

The M&S ad is worthy of note not just because it's particularly silly, but because it marks the first television advertising M&S has ever undertaken. And it shows: an experienced advertiser would have rejected this sort of baloney when it was just a flicker on a laptop.

Unfortunately for M&S, the timing of the new splash couldn't have been much worse. A fortnight ago the *Sun* ran a piece on how M&S in Liverpool had not been allowed to stock the company's brand new Autograph designer range, as Scousers were deemed too poor to afford its premier line. "Exclusive," then, but obviously not "for everyone", as the new come-on would have it. At M&S only those whose wallet matches their waistline can join the "normal" revolution.

THE OLYMPICS
SYDNEY 2000
IT'S THE MARATHON!...
WHERE IN AN UNRELENTING TEST OF ENDURANCE...
WE WATCH A GROUP OF PEOPLE GOING ON AND ON AND ON...
UNTIL WE'RE THOROUGHLY EXHAUSTED
BBC COMMENTARY TEAM
KenPyne

MEDIA NEWS

JOHN SIMPSON, the Beeb's modest foreign affairs editor, is the latest wrinkly to feel the cold draft of populism in Greg Dyke's de-Birtified BBC.

He's been complaining bitterly that he finds it ever more difficult to get his expanding frame on the air thanks to Tony "Head Prefect" Hall's increasing reliance on rookie news reporters instead of specialist correspondents to cover stories. These fresh faces are both easier on the viewer's eye and Hall's programme budget.

It seems only yesterday that these "generalist" reporters were not considered to be up to the job due to their lack of knowledge or stature. Indeed the BBC issued a grand statement of principle on the matter: "Stories of the day will no longer be approached by general reporters equipped only with a blank sheet and a handful of newspaper cuttings." The author of these words? Step forward... Tony "Head Prefect" Hall.

QUIZ show contestants aren't the only ignorant ones in broadcasting. Producers at Radio 4 have come up with a parlour game based on the spectacular dimness of the highly paid editors who sift through their programme ideas.

Called *Eyes Glaze Over,* it records the lack of recognition of famous names by commissioning editors as they bin ideas for being too highbrow. A programme about somebody called Joseph Heller is one recent entry. But still in the lead is a proposal for a programme about a chap called Sir Tom Stoppard, which met with a blank stare and a request for "an A4 sample of his work".

DUMB BRITAIN

PRODUCERS at *This Morning* are so desperate to throw away ratings-boosting prizes they've even dumbed down their quiz questions.

"What time can you see ITN's 11 o'clock news?" and "What's two plus two?" were two recent posers. Tragically, though, some contestants are still beyond even the help of Richard and Judy...

Richard: What nationality is the actor Anthony Hopkins?
Contestant: Er...
Richard: Look-you boyo... We'll keep a welcome in the hillsides...
Contestant: Scottish?
Richard: No! How green was my valley...
Contestant: Irish.

Judy: What's the Tory leader's Christian name?
Contestant: Er...
Richard: You know, Mr Hague?
Contestant: Pass.

Meanwhile BBC2's *The Weakest Link*, with the surly Anne Robinson, produced the following gems:

Q: Who was the first person to swim the English Channel?
A: Bleriot.
Q: Which product had an advertising ban imposed on it in 1999?
A: Marmalade.

JUST FANCY THAT!

NOW that *Fawlty Towers* has been voted the best British TV programme of all time, BBC executives are thankful that their predecessors didn't heed the advice of Ian Main, the comedy script editor who was asked to read the scripts of the first series.

In a memo to the head of light entertainment dated 29 May 1974, which has recently been found in the department's files, Main wrote: "*Fawlty Towers* by John Cleese and Connie Booth. I'm afraid I thought this one as dire as its title. It's a kind of 'Prince of Denmark' of the hotel world. A collection of clichés and stock characters which I can't see being anything but a disaster."

VETERAN parliamentary broadcaster John Sergeant apparently had other things on his mind when he was reporting on the fuel crisis at the height of the protest on Tuesday 12 September.

On ITN's early evening news Sergeant referred to oil tankers "leaving the distilleries". Was he anticipating a visit to a local hostelry after wrapping up his report, perhaps?

GOING LIVE

ON Thursday 14 September, *BBC Breakfast News*'s Rob Bonnet broadcast the sports news live from "sunny Sydney", the day before the Olympic games began.

As he was early there was nothing to report and nobody to interview. Instead, he topped and tailed three video packages about the footie and cricket back in the UK. As he was also 12,000 miles away, there was nobody to interview about these items either.

LIFE IMITATES ART, PT 94

ON the day the Gnome University of North London (formerly The World of Leather, North Circular Road, Junction 7 of the A94) announced an exciting new degree course (see last *Eye*), the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, also made an announcement.

"Academics study Big Brother", reported the Press Association newsfeed, noting how the university's department of TV, Film and TV Studies is to carry out detailed research into viewers' attitudes to the programme. "We would hope this research into interactive reality TV audiences would eventually find its way into text books," said lecturer and project co-ordinator Janet Jones, who will also oversee research into the "Nasty Nick" phenomenon.

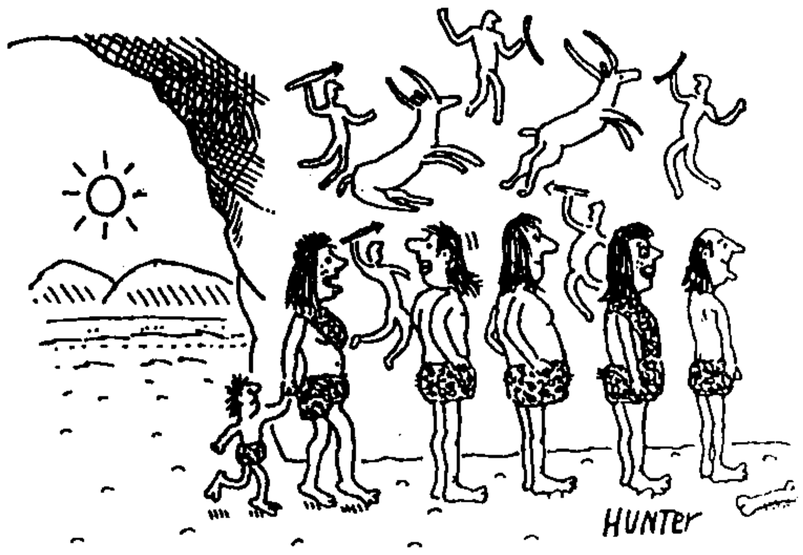
***SCANDAL in the Bins*, a Channel 4 documentary scheduled for 11 September, promised to give the complete low-down on how the *Eye*'s old friend Benjy the "Binman" Pell has made a living from rummaging through rubbish.**

Much to the surprise and dismay of the film-makers, however, it was pulled at the last minute when it was revealed that Pell has been charged with intent to deceive using a certificate of insurance, and will appear at Blackfriars crown court on 6 November.

OH, YEAH? My Bed is also on show in Ant Noises 2, which opens on Thursday, though its installation without her approval provoked a little tantrum when she visited the gallery last week.

"I mean, they'd f****** gone and installed the work without me even being here. That's just not on. This is my bed. If someone else installs it, it's just dirty linen. If I do it, it's art."

– *Tracey Emin, Evening Standard,12/9/00*



"Is this the queue for the café?"

Pseuds Corner

It is the most important and incredible series ever shown on television. You know in your soul that this is true, and this despite the fact that we are living through a Golden TV Era that will render our children yet unborn as jealous of us as I am of those who saw John Lennon, drunk on his Lost Weekend, run around with a sanitary towel stuck to his forehead. But even so, the full extent of *Big Brother*'s power is only just starting to be calculated. It has joined a nation together in the same way that, in 1988, Ecstasy briefly united anyone willing to wear baggy tracksuit bottoms, only more so...

***Big Brother*'s greatest power, however, has been its knack of providing the Full Soul Revelation... the way people's reaction to *Big Brother* lets you look deep into their mystical guts and read every last nuance of their soul.**

CAITLIN MORAN
The Times

Some people colour inside the lines
Some people colour outside the lines
We want to talk to people who don't even see the lines

Pearson Television is looking to set up a team of bright, enthusiastic, energetic and innovative programme makers to develop and launch a new generation of ideas for the UK's television and broadband services. If you think you have a different vision of television, or have the spirit to imagine a future for the internet within television, then we want you...

If you believe you are the person then let us know by answering the following:

Explain why you believe "**Content is** ... or **isn't... king**" (100 words or less)

If Shakespeare was alive today, which programme would he write for and why? If the programme doesn't exist invent it (50 words or less).

Advert in *Broadcast*

Where did you first get the idea for Apocalypse?

Norman Rosenthal: It's quite simple, it was seeing this extraordinary piece by the Chapmans [Hell 2000]. They rang me up and asked me to come to their studio, and I was completely unprepared for what I saw... I nearly fainted. It's one of the most amazing artworks I've ever seen — it's on a level with Bosch or Brueghel.

Independent

As the jet slumps from air pocket to air pocket, and the burnt lip of Vesuvius curls back below to reveal first a carious city and then the blue gullet of the Bay of Naples itself, I feel death enfold me with nauseous presentiment. That's what we get with the passage of three and a half centuries. Goethe

looked to arrival in this city as the summation of his aesthetic – but for me it's the confirmation of a phobia. After the short day of enlightenment comes the long, crepuscular period of neurosis.

WILL SELF
Building Design

Don't miss Barclay's account of "The Quest for a New Unified Theory". He will portray the impact of the Internet on Television as a turning point that is as momentous as Einstein's discovery of Relativity and will outline his Unifying Theory on the convergence of internet and television technologies and how this will change fundamentally today's assumptions about programming.

Press release for "Worldview Address" by NTL President and Chief Executive Barclay Knapp at the Edinburgh Festival

CONTRIBUTORS: Paul Ramsey, Paul Armstrong, APR, D.A. Rainbird, Anon.

£10 paid for entries

WHAT A TRUCK UP!

THE fuel crisis in Britain was a remarkable con trick by truckers and farmers, who protested for their vested interests but won widespread support by exploiting the public's gullibility.

A public which couldn't give a toss when thousands of miners, steelworkers, shipworkers, rail workers and dockers lost their jobs was apparently suddenly full of sympathy for hauliers who whined they would have to lay off staff if fuel prices did not fall. Public support for the refinery blockades was so great it implied the truckers were backed by some of the people, such as ex-miners, who were stabbed in the back by truckers when they tried to save their own jobs (*Eye* 974).

Somehow, few people were informed that hauliers pay less than the pump price for diesel because they can claim back the VAT. The debate on fuel costs was so simplistic that most members of the public were kept ignorant of the huge hidden subsidies the haulage industry already enjoys.

A report by Oxford Economic Research Associates last year (*Eye* 973) estimated that British hauliers would have to pay £2.5bn more in taxes each year to cover their full costs, and that was before the concessions to truckers in the last budget (*Eye* 999). The report said hauliers' infrastructure costs would rise 30 percent — and car owners would pay less — if all road users were made to cover the true costs of the structural damage they cause to the roads.

The haulage industry's problems are much more complex than the cost of diesel. Over-supply of vehicles means cut-throat competition is rife, encouraging widespread law breaking. Margins are so narrow that fluctuations in global prices, which many other businesses can endure, cause big problems to hauliers. "Restructuring" in other industries (ie mergers and job losses) as they move with the times is accepted as a fact of life, but hauliers expect the structure of their industry to remain unchanged ad infinitum. By supporting them, taxpayers in effect said: "Er, ok... take even more of our money and continue your ruthless competition, endangering our lives through overloading, poor maintenance and speeding."

A survey earlier this year indicated that 80 percent of the public supported greater use of trains instead of lorries, yet that same public has now apparently backed the truckers. Any government concessions as a result will make it even less likely that significant volumes will switch to the largely unsubsidised rail freight system.

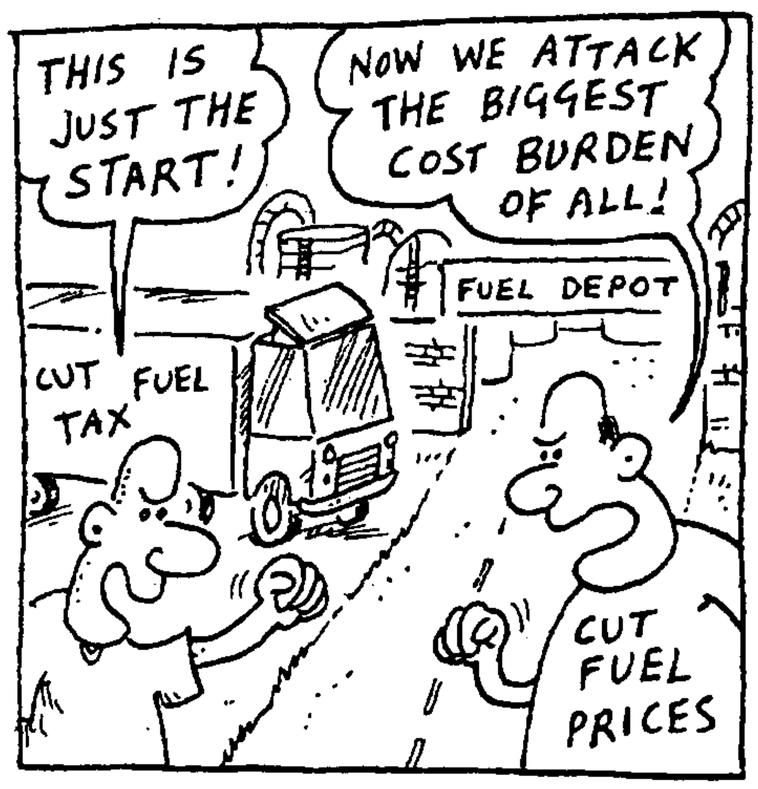
The oil companies must have been delighted. They sat back and watched pressure mount on the government for a cut in fuel duty (which does not fluctuate with the price of oil). That would give the oil companies leeway to charge more for their product without driving consumers away. A cut in duty, especially if it coincided with a fall in the crude oil price, could encourage motorists and hauliers to drive even more often and further — meaning more traffic congestion, more pollution and more lolly for the likes of BP, Shell and Texaco.

For farmers fuel duty is something of a red herring. Many farm vehicles use red diesel, for which duty is 3.13p per litre compared with 48.8p per litre on normal diesel; red diesel costs 20.32p a litre (net of VAT which farmers also recover). But the farmers won little public sympathy when they protested at being ripped off by supermarkets and undercut by cheap imports from countries with a cavalier attitude to animal welfare. That taught the farmers that the public does not care as long as food is cheap. So this time they appealed directly to the public's greed. If fuel duty is lowered the cost of red diesel will drop by all of a fraction of 3.13p per litre. Like the truckers, the farmers have much deeper problems than the cost of fuel.

Motorists say no to costly fuel just like turkeys would say no to Christmas. But if fuel really has become too expensive for car owners there would now be a significant reduction in the number of big cars (including 4x4s) on the roads, car use would be declining as people walked and cycled local journeys, and the speed of traffic on motorways would fall as drivers conserved fuel. None of which has happened.

If Gordon Brown cuts fuel duty across the board, help will not be targeted at needy rural dwellers. They will still pay more for fuel than most urban dwellers because the oil companies price up where they have a local monopoly. Financial gains will accrue to people who drive unnecessarily large cars and the ones who use their cars for every journey, even for local trips like the school run. Conversely the 29 percent of households without a car will gain nothing from the handout; impoverished pensioners, the long-term unemployed and many disabled people will not see their train fares reduced as a result. The net effect, then, will be to widen the gap between the affluent and the poor. Long live Thatcherism!

'Dr B. Ching'



DOING THE ROUNDS

Bristol update Pt 94

THE Bristol Royal Infirmary inquiry may not be reporting until 2001, three years after it was announced, but the recriminations rumble on.

M.D. was recently fingered by obese men's health expert Dr Ian Banks in the *BMA News Review* for not raising concerns about child heart surgery in 1992 with the General Medical Council (GMC), rather than the *Eye*. Banks holds the touchingly naïve view that telling the GMC anything in the early 90s would have guaranteed action. As the victims of the disgraced gynaecologist Richard Neale discovered, the GMC has never been in any fit state to tackle the issue of doctors' competence (*Eye* 1008).

In fact, as M.D. reported in *Eye* 995 in July 1998, Bristol was raised at the GMC by Dr Michael O'Donnell — a long-serving council member and campaigner for clinical accountability — but no action was taken. This was hotly disputed by the GMC when M.D. gave evidence to the public inquiry last October. It claimed O'Donnell had not raised the matter officially and therefore the GMC had not looked into the matter.

M.D. suggested the inquiry seek a statement from Dr O'Donnell, who had retired from the GMC but whose address features in the *Medical Directory* and *Who's Who*. On 22 November 1999 the inquiry duly sent a request for evidence to Dr O'Donnell via the office of Anthony Townsend, director of standards in education at the GMC. It was forwarded to O'Donnell on 2 September 2000, nearly 10 months later. In that period O'Donnell has had a quintuple heart bypass and streptococcal septicaemia. However, his statement is worth the wait.

"Over lunch at a GMC council — or it could have been a committee meeting — I'd raised the subject of what seemed to be happening in Bristol, almost certainly prompted by what I'd read in *Private Eye*. Though one or two of the people I discussed it with seemed concerned, the general reaction was one of intense apathy."

Five years later, when the GMC was finally forced into action, O'Donnell "got a number of phone calls from doctors in and around Bristol who hadn't realised I was no longer on the GMC, wanting me to know what a good chap Wisheart was and wondering if I could 'do anything' to get the charges dropped. One of the callers assured me, rather alarmingly, that someone in the past had had managed to 'do something' about another case."

O'Donnell also details two health screeners "who had to decide if a doctor's ability to practise might be impaired by any illness or alcohol dependency". The pair "were known to have 'drinking problems' and yet were allowed to remain in office... I raised my concern about the first screener with the then president. The problem with the second was so widely known that the secretariat tried to ensure that alcohol was not available at midday during meetings of the health committee."

Whether today's GMC is fit to practise remains a moot point. Not only does it take it 10 months to forward a letter, but when M.D. did the right thing in June 1999 and passed on concerns raised about heart surgery at the Brompton to Sir Donald Irvine, president of the GMC, I did not receive a reply after 56 days (*Eye* 982, 6 August 1999).

The GMC then drafted a letter to *The Lancet* stating M.D. had never asked for a response, before retracting it, issuing M.D. with a written apology and advising him not to send mail requiring a swift reply directly to the president.

Meanwhile the trade mag *Hospital Doctor* is being used as a platform for James Wisheart to "talk exclusively in detail for the first time about the Bristol Scapegoats" (7 September 2000), having already done so to Radio 4, the *Independent* and Channel 5. Wisheart admits that when Bristol introduced the arterial switch operation for neonates the death rates "stuck out like a sore thumb" as many departments around the country were years ahead on the procedure. He also admits that the death rates for the procedure — nine out of 13 — was far higher than the team had expected.

However, Wisheart believes he has been demonised, that the media belief (that the deaths were due to inadequate surgery) is "a long way from the truth" and that a learning curve for new procedures "can never be done away with altogether." But Bristol's learning curve for switches never got off the ground and M.D. has yet to hear of a doctor who, knowing this, would have allowed his child to have the operation in Bristol at that time. Except Mr Wisheart. A true martyr.

M.D.

Down on the Fish Farm

FOR the second year running, thousands of miles of coastline have been closed to shellfish fishermen because of toxic algal blooms. Out of the 60 sites affected, 57 are in areas used for fish farming. None had any record of toxicity prior to 1988 when there was a massive expansion of fake salmon farms in these areas.

Readers will recall that the clueless Scottish executive (SE) fisheries minister John Home Robertson insists these outbreaks are "naturally occurring" and have nothing whatever to do with untreated fish farm sewage being dumped to the marine environment. An SE spokesman said: "The government's policy is that we do not compensate for things that happen naturally and never have done." So, tough luck on the shellfish fishermen facing bankruptcy.

Meanwhile Marine Harvest Ltd (see *Eye* 1009), persistent offender against Seap (Scottish environment pollution agency) rules and regulations, has been up before the McBeak again. The company was admonished at Fort William sheriff court for an incident that left shellfish debris, fish heads and other waste from its Blar Mhor processing plant floating in the scenic River Lochy. There's nice.

'Old Trout'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

HB SAUCE

COMPLAINTS about the administration of housing benefit (HB) have soared by 73 percent in the last year, says the local government ombudsman for England, and guess what: most of the increase is down to the pisspoor performance of just four London boroughs where the control of HB has been privatised. Southwark (CSL), Lambeth (Capita), Hackney and Islington (both IT Net) account for a staggering 60 percent of all complaints received from the 33 London boroughs.

In Southwark a benefit fraud inspectorate (BFI) report castigates CSL's handling of HB for "unlawful working practices" and "poor quality fraud investigations", and says CSL investigators have been acting as judge and jury when investigating alleged fraud. Claimants have had benefits stopped on suspicion of fraud when their "change of circumstance" letters have been sitting in the huge pile of unopened mail all along.

The BFI notes that the backlog of unprocessed HB claims was 14,000 in May 1999, one year after CSL won the contract. Just four months later it was 34,000. While CSL's contract states that all calls should be answered in the first minute, the report finds that 31 percent of callers give up before the customer call centre picks up the phone. In addition, Southwark has paid CSL £600,000 to help overcome the backlog it created.

In Lambeth, meanwhile, Crapita has been economical with the truth regarding the number of unprocessed claims. Faced with a huge backlog, Crapita decided to, er, lie. It craftily ring-fenced all unprocessed claims and unopened mail, some 20,000 items received before 1 April, and then counted everything that arrived afterwards as "not part of the backlog". After weeks of claims that the backlog had been substantially reduced, two rooms of unprocessed claims and unopened letters were found, all of which were received after 1 April.

PS: In Camden, where HB is still administered in-house, 98 percent of claims are processed within statutory time limits.

FAIR KOP?

LIVERPOOL FC's (LFC) plan to build a new £100m stadium in Victorian Stanley Park is causing considerable controversy.

The raised voices include the club's neighbour and arch-rival Everton — and no wonder. Everton has also been seeking to relocate; but five years ago it was told by the city council that building on Stanley Park was out of the question. Liverpool has had no such warning.

One factor behind the change of heart could be the arrival of David Henshaw as Liverpool's new chief executive last year. During his time as head of neighbouring Knowsley, Henshaw oversaw the sale of a large tract of land to LFC at a knockdown price to build a soccer academy. Part of the land was later sold on by the club to the David Lloyd Leisure Group for a handsome profit (see *Eyes passim*).

Liverpool FC's own chief executive Rick Parry has always praised Henshaw's efforts to assist the club. Now that Henshaw has popped up in Liverpool proper, it seems another big land deal is on the way. Interestingly, at the last count six city councillors were known to be Liverpool season ticket holders. The local government ombudsman has been highly critical of the "bad practice" of allowing these councillors to vote on matters affecting the club.

Residents near Stanley Park, which recently received a £7m lottery grant to help its restoration, regard LFC's predatory designs with bitter disappointment. The notion that the move only involves building on a car park is nonsense. The plans show other land will be gobbled up, including playing fields where hundreds of youngsters in the Anfield Youth League play football every weekend.

NEWPORT DIGS IN

WHEN Terry Matthews, reputedly the richest man in Wales, offered a large tract of land to the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) to build a centre of excellence in Newport, rugby-loving locals might have been expected to react with delight. Despite Matthews's clout — as the owner of the 250-bed Celtic Manor hotel and three championship golf courses, he is one of Newport's biggest employers — local environmentalists and archaeologists soon objected.

Newport council then requested an environmental impact assessment (EIA) on the site in Caerleon beside the River Usk. Matthews's company Celtic Manors commissioned the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) on behalf of the WRU to carry it out. GGAT quickly concluded the development would have no adverse impact.

This is not strictly the case as the EIA actually turned up a major Roman settlement and legionary cemetery. A public consultation on the planned development raised serious archaeological objections, including fears that the GGAT archaeologists should have dug deeper. Because the site is by a river, it is possible that rare organic remains such as wood, cloth or leather have survived.

Last month Newport council was due to come to a decision when the proposals were called in by the Welsh assembly in anticipation of a public inquiry. This did not prevent the council from dismissing the archaeological concerns raised in the public consultation, and voicing its firm support for the Caerleon centre of excellence — after taking expert advice from, er, GGAT.

CARRY ON COUNCILLOR

THE words "pot" and "kettle" have been heard in Southwark, where Labour has a majority of just one. In June last year the then leader of the council Niall Duffy called on Lib Dem councillor Cliff Hodson to resign after Hodson decided to spend more time with his ailing wife. Duffy argued that electors in Hodson's Cathedral ward deserved a councillor who could give undivided attention. In February this year Duffy himself resigned as leader having accepted a job with the RSPCA in Horsham, Sussex. Duffy decided his new job wouldn't interfere with his duties as a councillor for Rye ward, Peckham, because he still lived in Southwark. But last month Duffy moved to Worthing, on the Sussex coast, and decided — lo and behold — that the move would still not restrict him in representing the Rye ward in Peckham. Obviously his decision is entirely unrelated to Labour's wafer-thin majority in Southwark, which has been Labour since the beginning of time.

High Principals

EDUCATION minister David Blunkett's recently knighted pal, the further education supremo Sir George Sweeney, thoughtfully transformed the financial crisis he was drafted in to resolve at Sheffield College (*Eye* 1006) into a human crisis, just in time to hand over to his successor, John Taylor.

The day Taylor arrived as principal, lecturers' union NATFHE announced an 87 percent vote in favour of strike action from Monday 18 September if Taylor failed to resolve their concerns before that date.

As is traditional with FE sackings, Sweeney wrote to staff in the middle of the summer holidays to say that as part of his rescue scheme almost 200 of them would be made redundant. The union was angry that while 197 people applied for voluntary redundancy, 78 were rejected and facing the threat of less financially advantageous compulsory redundancy.

The strike was suspended at the last minute after the college held an emergency meeting and said it was confident it could avoid compulsory redundancies. The threat of strike action remains, and NATFHE responded: "The price the college will have to pay in terms of mistrust and lost goodwill from all staff if it attempts now to make people redundant is incalculable."

Employees who *have* been guaranteed new jobs in the restructured college are the senior managers who were in place when the £5.3m deficit which sparked the crisis was allowed to build up under previous principal Ken Ruddiman.

All this is very embarrassing for Blunkett: not just because of his close friendship with Sir George, but because it is taking place in his own constituency. Despite motions passed by every Labour party constituency in Sheffield condemning the compulsory redundancies, Blunkett made it clear at his own constituency meeting on Friday 8 September that the strike would not go ahead — whether he planned to exert ministerial pressure or simply did not believe the lecturers would go through with it was unclear.

Sweeney may enjoy the support of the education secretary, but the same cannot be said of the college governors. It was a measure of his popularity that only one of 22 governors attended his leaving do — an invitation-only, £25-a-head bash at the city's Royal Victoria Holiday Inn.

Sheffield staff who were granted voluntary redundancy on 31 August were made to leave the same day. This seems to be becoming common practice in FE colleges. At the end of July four IT workers at Derwentside College in County Durham were told to clear their desks when the college announced it was bringing in National Data Services, to take over data management.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

WHAT IS THE WORLD COMING TO! THE PRICE OF OIL IS DIFFERENT IN EVERY COUNTRY... IT'S ABSURD!
OIL CRISIS
WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE DEPENDENT ON THE STUFF... I MEAN, THE WORLD REVOLVES AROUND IT
GOOD THING WE GOT OUR STOCKPILE IN EARLY
MORE FENNEL SALAD, QUIN?
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

DOWN ON THE FARM

IT IS an ancient right of every Englishman under Magna Carta that the state cannot confiscate his property without court approval unless he is paid its full value in compensation. Several hundred Englishmen wondering whatever happened to that right are the pig farmers of East Anglia placed in so-called "protection zones" around the farms infected with swine fever.

Farmers with pigs actually infected with this highly contagious plague receive relatively generous compensation when their herds are compulsorily slaughtered. But those who fall into a protection zone are forbidden to move any animals off the farm. They must thus continue to pay thousands of pounds a week for their upkeep without being able to earn any income, and receive not a penny in compensation.

Because the animals continue to breed and multiply, on scores of farms they are now desperately overcrowded, creating serious welfare problems. The MAFFia has responded by offering in such cases to slaughter excess pigs under the Pig Welfare (Disposal) Scheme, giving £35 an animal, way below their market value, in compensation.

The choice for the farmer forbidden to sell healthy pigs is thus between going out of business fast, by holding on to them at huge cost; or going out of business slightly more slowly by having them officially slaughtered for welfare reasons at a loss of around £50 per animal. In this context, the fortunate farmers are those whose animals have been infected, because at least they receive compensation rather nearer the market value of around £90.

To save money the MAFFia has thus set up a scheme which means it would actually pay a farmer to ensure that his pigs are infected, and which otherwise can only result in several hundred pig farmers very soon going out of business altogether. Scores have already exhausted any possible lines of bank credit, and many have already put their houses and land in hock as security for earlier borrowings to get them through the industry's crisis over the past two years. The police have already been asked to investigate incidents of dead pigs being found dumped overnight on farms.

Admittedly some of the MAFFia vets may have assisted the spread of the disease, as they arrive on farms to test animals, ignoring the most basic hygiene rules by wearing the same clothes and boots they have worn on earlier visits to other, possibly infected farms. Farmers recall that official bungling and inadequate compensation played a major part in causing illegal movements of stock during the Netherlands swine fever outbreak in 1998, which cost the Dutch industry £400m.

But at least in Holland, farmers prohibited from earning a living by protection zones were compensated for having their animals killed. In the UK it seems that swine fever is just the MAFFia's latest excuse to pursue its strategic plan to close down British agriculture altogether.

Another sector in which the grand plan is making good progress towards that goal is the meat industry. When A.H. Griffiths, a Hertfordshire abattoir, recently found its monthly meat inspection charges had for no reason been increased from £2,400 to more than £4,000, it was clear to the owner that, since this made his operation unviable, the only intention must be to force him out of business. Latest figures show that, in recent months, another 21 slaughterhouses have closed and some 200 others are still hanging over the abyss.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

Letters

Private Eye

Those Beardie letters in full...

Sir,

Another fortnight goes by in the saga of the misinformation campaign surrounding Camelot versus The People's Lottery and more, mostly amusing, fiction is published in Private Eye. May I, once again, point out for the record that there is no link whatsoever between The People's Lottery and any of Virgin's companies. The lottery bid has been chosen to go forward in negotiations with the Lottery Commission because it has promised more money for good causes and its plans were considered more robust than Camelot's. Camelot has been excluded from further negotiations for a number of reasons due to its own performance and the performance of its supplier G-Tech.

As for Virgin, it is not "your typical" British company of the type frequently criticised by Private Eye. My philosophy is branded venture capital based on long term plans to build new companies on a global basis. We raise money by selling stakes to other investors and nurturing the businesses into profit over a number of years. If we had thought short term, then neither Virgin Atlantic or Virgin Records would be the businesses they are today just as companies like Virgin Direct and Virgin Mobile amongst others will be great worldwide Virgin businesses of tomorrow.

Yours faithfully,
SIR RICHARD BRANSON
(Beardie to all my friends at the Eye).

Sir,

I hold no brief for Richard Branson, but I can also think of many other less than entirely successful businessmen and women. Could the Eye's focus on Branson be anything to do with his beard by any chance?

Yours,
KEITH FLETT,
London N17.

Sir,

Re: Sir Richard Branson. I have read what you have to say about the above gentleman — I can tell you something else.

When Sir Richard heard that my grand-daughter Lucie Blackman had been abducted in Japan he arranged return flights to Tokyo FOC for my son and three others searching for her.

He had 10,000 leaflets printed with Lucie's picture and distributed. Sir Richard was a guest of honour in Japan at a press conference — he used the occasion to remind the press of Lucie's disappearance. A generous act by any standards.

Yours faithfully,
ERIC A. BLACKMAN,
Weymouth, Dorset.

POLICE are looking for leads after a charity box in the shape of a Labrador dog was stolen from a pub in Bromyard.

Hereford Times

Beyond the Fringe

Sir,

Re: Lunatic Fringe, Eye 1010. With reference to the Scotsman hacks who review the Fringe shows. In 1998, I was a layout editor for a free weekly Fringe newspaper called Three Weeks (now in its sixth year). At this time, the paper was written and edited by students and other young Edinburgh-based writers, all unpaid and doing it for the love of it. We made no secret of this, indeed were proud that amateurs could produce a quality product.

In that year, we published an article alleging that The Scotsman reviewers were not only inexperienced hacks just off Student, the Edinburgh Uni student newspaper, but that many of them were also "tired and emotional" whilst reviewing shows. We thought this particularly irresponsible as a Scotsman review can make or break a show.

The Scotsman promptly threatened us with a lawsuit, but not before a number of professional daily papers had published articles along similar lines.

The Three Weeks editorial team eventually decided to publish a partial apology; the paper was a non-profitmaking venture and we had no money to fight a court action. However, the team also knew, personally, a number of the reviewers that year and held that for many of them, the allegations we had made were true (I myself reviewed a show and knew the Scotsman reviewer: he was somewhat the worse for wear, left in the interval and then savaged the show — I gave it 4/5).

Whether the same strong-arm tactics were used on professional dailies is unknown.

Yours with a loathing of The Scotsman and all its works,
C. MOUNSEY,
Edinburgh.

Lookalike

Flurp

Irving

Sir,

Does Aryan supremacist Dr David Irving come from the same race of Hairy Boglins as Flurp here? If he is preaching under false ethnic pretences, I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
ANGELA SAGE (Mrs),
Macclesfield, Cheshire.

Remember this?

Sir,

I was just browsing the small ads in Eye 1008 and saw the "Eye remember all who died 6th & 9th August 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki" panel. All very touching. I do not know who put the ad in but I wonder whether they will be placing a similar piece to remember those who were tortured, raped and murdered by the Japanese in Nanking in 1937/8, something that does not normally get a mention.

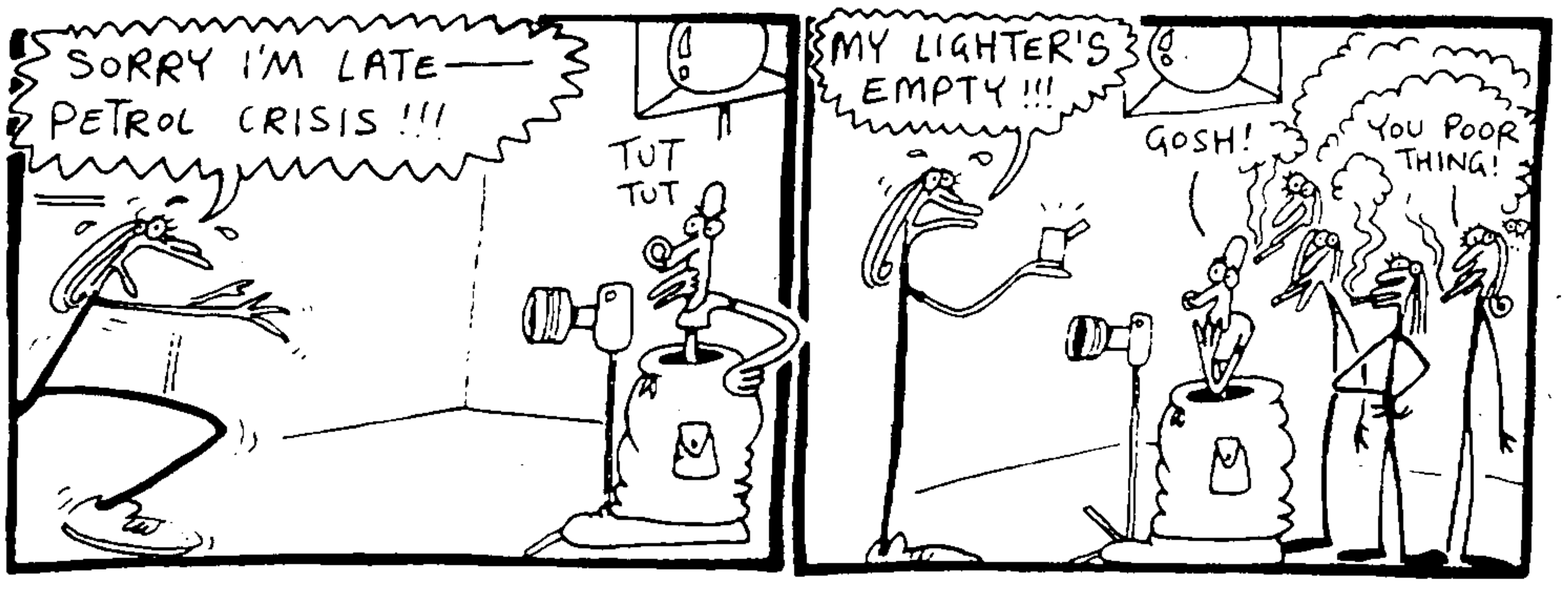
Just to put it into perspective, 300,000 died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 400,000 perished at the hands of the Japanese in Nanking. The dropping of the atom bomb was an act that brought the Second World War to an unexpectedly swift conclusion (thus saving lives). The rape of Nanking was wicked, inhuman barbarism.

Which victims should we really remember, I wonder?

Yours faithfully,
NICK HUTTON,
S.R. Vietnam.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



I-SPY

London N11

Submitted by Bradley Davis. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Unfunny old world

Sir,

The inclusion of the story about Shaun Hayoe in Victor Lewis-Smith's FOW column was a gross miscalculation of the boundaries of taste. There is satire or ridicule and then there is pitiful. It is impossible to even raise a wry smile on reading the account of his death and burial.

Things like this do nothing for the reputation of your organ.

EMMA CYPHER-DOURNES,

Via e-mail.

Eyeballs

Sir,

Andrew Smith (page 3, main story) is not an employment minister, but rather chief secretary to the treasury, and Brian Moore (Colemanballs) is not a BBC MoTD presenter, but works for ITV. And retired two years ago.

AL DUNSMUIR,

Croydon.

Sir,

Sir John Eliot Gardiner is, undoubtedly, a difficult old sod. But he probably knows that J.S. Bach died 250 years ago, unlike Lunchtime O'Boulez...

Cantatedly,
NICK SWEENEY,

Via e-mail.

Sir,

As an employee at Glenfield Hospital, and working in the cardiac unit, I can say with great delight that neither the breast nor cardiac services are to be closed (or as proposed) moved. Could you please pass on this to M.D.?

Yours,
PHILIP DEVINE,

Via e-mail.

Sir,

In Number Crunching (Eye 1010), surely Cherie's earnings should be more than the £40,000 written down there — should it be £400,000 instead?

DAVID CHALLENDER,

Via e-mail.

● ***Yes. Ed.***

No leg to stand on

Sir,

Does Sally Jockstrap edit Colemanballs? Christopher Martin Jenkins' alleged solecism is no such thing.

There is, in cricket, a familiar fielding position known as short leg. A bowler will occasionally employ two of them: forward and backward short leg. Hence "two short legs". They stand very close (about 2 yards) behind the batsmen and so even if they are not literally breathing down his neck, their presence is a sign of aggressive bowling and fielding so the figure of speech is apt.

Will you be asking for your tenner back?

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW TAYLOR,

London SW1.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Gerry Anderson: *These Thunderbirds models are expensive collectors' items. They cost £320 each.*
Interviewer: *How much do they cost then?*
Gerry Anderson: *£320.*
BBC1
(Anthony Jones)

"And Swansea have an uphill mountain to climb now."
JOHN HARDY, BBC Radio Wales
(Pete James)

"It's got NOTHING to do with his ability. In fact, it has got to do with his ability."
BARRY VENISON, ITV
(Ronnie MacPherson)

"The Sydney Olympics transport plan relies heavily on the rail network. It is expected that 80% of every single spectator will arrive by train."
HUGH RIMINGTON, Channel 9, Aus.
(Malcolm Sambridge)

"Andy Caddick's shadow is longer than he is, and he's a very tall man."
JONATHAN AGNEW, Test Match Special
(Mike Stoddart)

Letter from Liberia

from Our Own Correspondent

IN LIBERIA we pray a lot. We would pray, anyway, out of habit, because we are a religious people, but we are praying particularly hard at the moment out of fear. We are frightened because America, Britain and the European Union are threatening to impose sanctions on us.

They believe that our president, Charles Taylor, is a gun-running, diamond-dealing tyrant and a threat to regional security who needs to be taught a lesson. We are also frightened that in this climate another ambitious political exile might choose to invade Liberia to "redeem" us from "the tyrannical gun-running diamond dealer". We do not want to be redeemed again. Previous redemptions have destroyed our families, our houses and our country.

Most African countries have been independent for less than 50 years. We have been free for more than three times as long, but have not used the extra 100 years wisely or well. Our founding fathers – freed American slaves – struggled to get on with the locals, finding them primitive and backward. They built themselves ivory towers in Monrovia, our capital, and lived in a fantasy world of top hats and tails, white make-up and a rigid belief in God and the constitution.

Our first redeemer was Master Sergeant Doe. He was the "country boy" we had all been waiting for. In 1980 Doe overthrew the "Americo-Liberian" dominated government, paraded the ministers naked through the streets and then shot them. And how we cheered. But Doe was not a great success. He was an illiterate tribalist with cannibalistic tendencies. It came as little surprise when Charles Taylor, a former government official who served time in a US jail, launched himself as our saviour and started a civil war in what was to lead to Doe's gruesome death – and the death or exile of half the population – before his final victory three years ago.

No one came out well out from our war. Rival liberation movements sprang up like rats, as cravenly ambitious politicians tried to exploit half-crazed teenagers high on drugs and with a penchant for wearing women's wigs. The half-crazed teenagers ended up dead, the politicians with blood on their hands and the bitterness of failure on their tongues.

Today's Monrovia is a living testament to the thwarted ambitions of those power hungry redeemers: government buildings are pock-marked with shell holes, houses stand black and roofless. We have no electricity after dark and running water is rare, courtesy of one group of rebels who thoughtfully blew up the dam outside the city.

People point the finger at what we are doing in Sierra Leone, but Daniel Chea, our defence minister, fond of very large cigars and gold gleaming from his every wrist and finger, is more concerned about attacks coming from over the border in Guinea. He makes threats, but outside his window you can see soldiers with limps and bandaged heads miserably loitering among rusted tanks and mangled armoured personnel carriers.

Chea was sacked this month, only to be reinstated a few days later. It is the kind of soap opera-style government we have come to know and love. President Taylor also likes to order cabinet ministers to sweep classrooms and cut the grass as a contribution to the education of the nation. He accuses the big powers of bully-boy tactics and the US ambassador of making up stories about him.

Bismarck Merrick, Washington's representative and a dry old fish, mumbles about good governance and how sanctions are the only way to deal with tyrants. But he is losing out badly to one of the great talkers of the world. "An American satellite," President Taylor says, "passes over Liberia once every 41 minutes. They can take a picture of a pin head. If I was gun running, they would have it on film. They don't."

Every Sunday Charles Taylor, his wife, his relatives, the defence minister, the army chief-of-staff, the head of security, killers, ex-killers, prostitutes, thieves and just about every Liberian who can walk or hobble or crawl, goes to church. Religion thrives in Monrovia. A new church is built virtually every week and a new preacher is born wherever there is money to be made. Charismatic priests hold 2,000-strong congregations captive for hours dancing, shouting and screaming about sin and damnation and the need to donate bucket loads of dollars.

And we do contribute! Why do we allow ourselves to be duped and put so much trust in politicians, churchmen and God? Well, anything to avoid blaming ourselves for our own misfortunes.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"As soon as Huang Chun-ming entered the emergency department," a spokesman for Shalu General Hospital in Taichung told reporters, "it was obvious that his right hand was missing. At first, he told us that a gang of teenage joyriders in Wangkaoliao had sliced his hand off with a knife and thrown it away, but we soon started to disbelieve his story. The many jagged wounds on his wrist didn't suggest a clean cut, and we couldn't find the severed hand in the undergrowth, where the gang attack had supposedly taken place. Police officers were called, and eventually he broke down and told them the truth.

"It now seems that Huang had accumulated debts of over $900,000,

and decided to take drastic action to ease his financial problems. First, he took out eleven separate 'personal injury' insurance policies, and then asked a friend, Yu Wank-ta, to cut off his hand. Yu Wank-ta agreed, so they drove to a secluded spot in Yu's van, and Huang drank two bottles of rice wine to anaesthetise himself. Then he lay down and stretched out his hand, while Yu drove over it. The hand was damaged, but stayed attached, so Yu decided to hack it off with a garden strimmer. He tried several times but, although the blade caused a lot of damage, it couldn't cut through the bone, so finally Yu Wank-ta took out a carpentry saw from his van, and sawed through the bone. Then he drove Huang to hospital.

"Under the circumstances, I do not think that Huang is likely to receive any money from the insurance companies, but we have at least found his hand. He'd given it to his mother, and she'd tidied it away in a closet. But it had gone black by the time we found it, so reattachment is pretty much out of the question." *(Taipei Times, 19/8/00. Spotter: Stuart Davis)*

—o—

"They should never have let my brother out of the asylum," the sister of Vsevolod Pilnyak told reporters in Moscow. "They knew what he was like. A leopard doesn't change his spots. He was bound to eat somebody else, and this time it turned out to be mother."

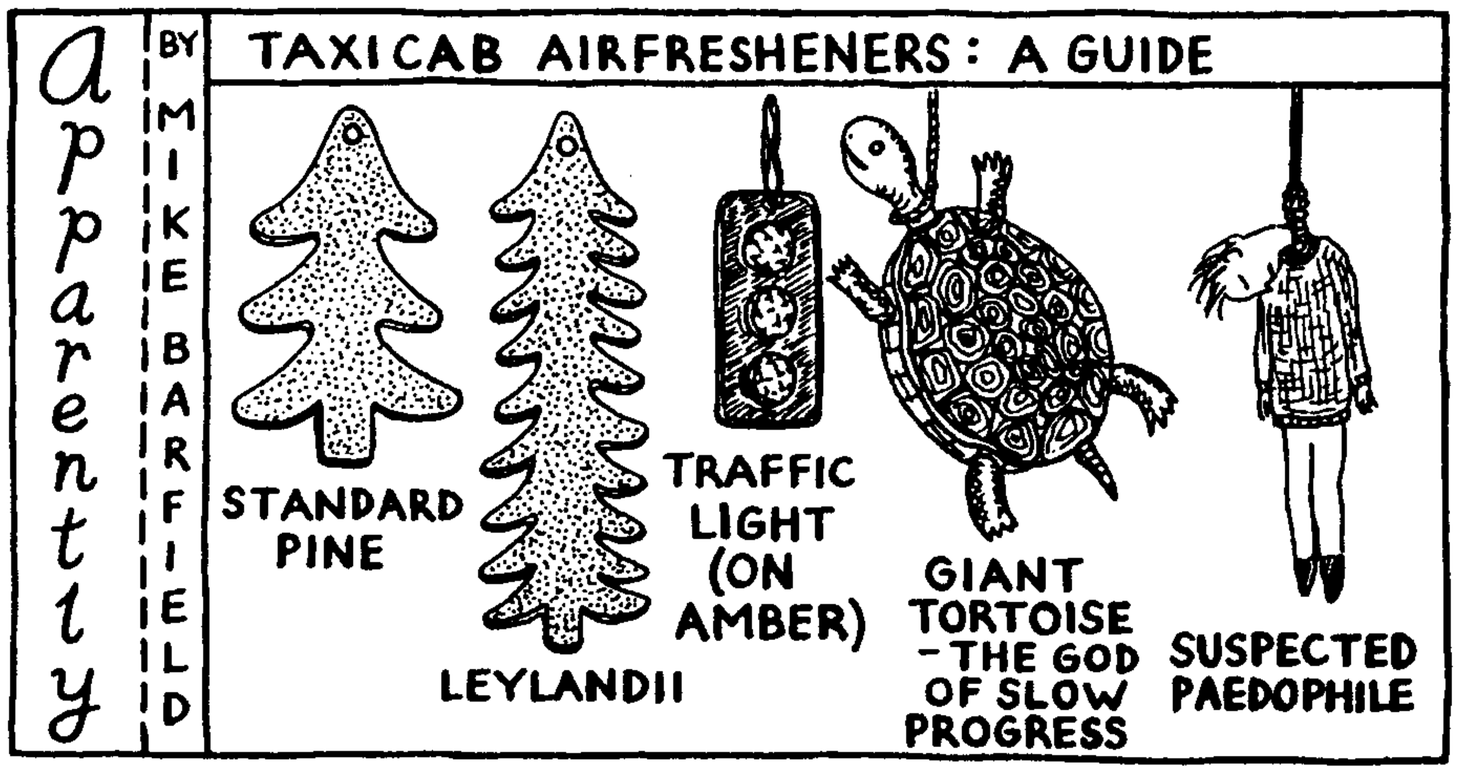
Earlier, a police officer had described the arrest of Vsevolod Pilnyak in a Moscow suburb, on a charge of cannibalism (a crime for which he already had two previous convictions). "Neighbours had been complaining about the smell from the Pilnyak's apartment, and when we broke in, it was atrocious. We found parts of a woman's dismembered body lying in the hallway, and half a head placed atop a hat stand. Then we saw Pilnyak, cooking a piece of liver on a small barbecue. He told us that his mother had died 'of natural causes' a week earlier, and rather than tell the authorities, he'd decided to eat her.

"By the time we got there, he'd beheaded her, cooked and eaten both her arms, and most of one leg, and he'd disembowelled her too. We suspect that he killed her, but that's hard to prove because there's not much of her left. However, the cannibalism charge should have him back behind bars, this time for good, so we're not going to bother to arrest him for murder." *(Moskovsky Komsomolets, 25/8/00. Spotter: Anne Leonard)*

—o—

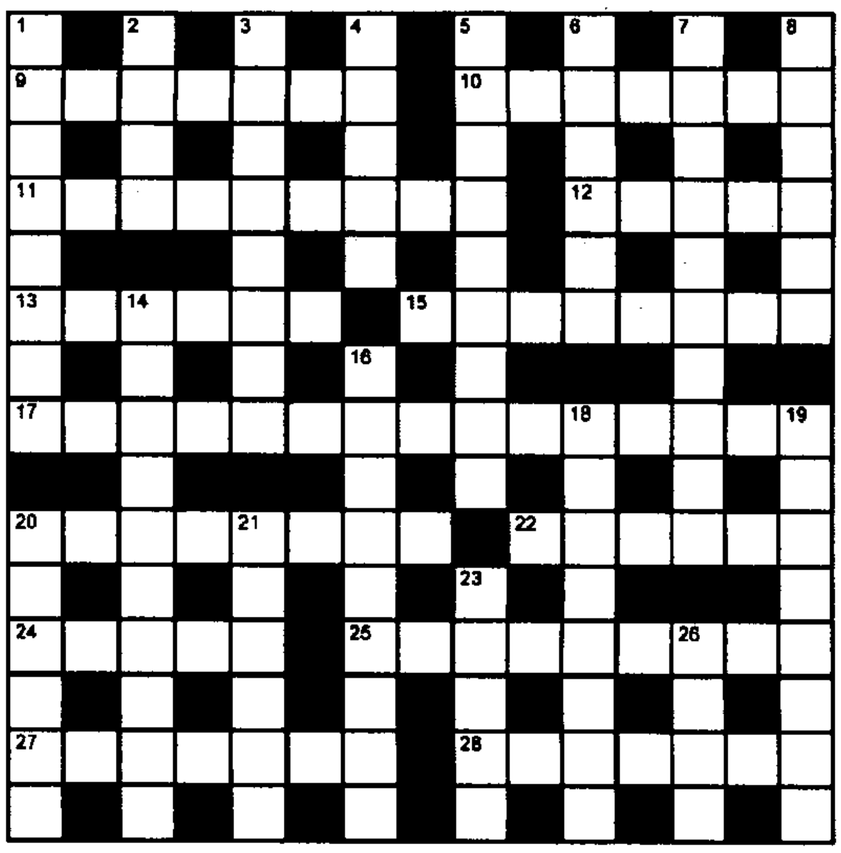
"The East Japan Railway Company deeply regrets the delays to services on the JR Oito Line in Itoigawa, Niigata Prefecture on Saturday. This was due to millipedes on the line. Clusters of these millipedes emerged on Friday night, and covered about 400 metres of the track, on an upward sloping section. When trains began running next morning, they ran over the insects, and squashed out their bodily fluids. This acted as a lubricant, causing the train wheels to slip. The trains were then unable to get up the slope, causing severe delays.

"We suspect that there has been mass breeding of millipedes this summer, due to the extreme heat. However, the insects have now been swept away, and the area sprayed with insecticide, so we do not expect any repetition of this incident. With apologies, The East Japan Railway Company." (The Daily Yomiuri, 31/7/00. Spotter: Peter A Goldsbury)



EYE CROSSWORD 166

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

9 Name given by Brenda to heart-throb rather like Mr Bean (7)
10 Burst in on oldie MP getting changed (7)
11 Wrong cover for Jeffrey Archer's type of fiction? (9)
12 TV celeb, Dicky, in C&A (5)
13 Fast food: obese dirty old man's habit? (3,3)
15 Bonk and peak with bottle-top (5,3)
17 Violet has sex with divine politician, with kinky aid, after kisses and "activities down under" (7,8)
20 One way to present statistics from Blair primarily: sly ingenuity (3,5)
22 Political catchphrase from 'Hard Work' article (6)
24 Beast humped, reached orgasm and left (5)
25 Like a story about Nato deal involving Chechnya's leader? (9)
27 Pot and crack (top grade), the universal fix (7)
28 Hack sticking point into sensitive male (7)

DOWN

1 Kill and fight for somewhere to keep a substance for snorting (8)
2 Brenda's residence lacks the soothing ointment for one type of sex (4)
3 Intelligentsia turned on by amphetamine artist – it's sick (8)
4 Do this up and drug yourself (5)
5 Edwina's 150 turns – a dangerous power source as it was once known (9)
6 Bill has a crazy hep exterior of a native American (6)
7 Reprimand makes you throw up on getting engaged (10)
8 "Vera screwed by politician", put rather differently (6)
14 Gnome TV broadcast includes Brenda and new Labour ministers (10)
16 Daily, Labour's leader gets one over Brown – the impostor! (9)
18 Go soft and fluff nuclear accident (8)
19 Hanging around not having an erection (8)
20 Biro and old records deployed by strong-arm types? (6)
21 Stir no longer produced by hospital head (1-5)
23 Sounds like a means of passing on casual wear (5)
26 Send up American publication (4)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 29.9.00. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

Solution to Crossword No. 165

Winner: MRS A.M. WILLIAMS

ACROSS: 1/3 ac. Big Brother 3 (see 1 ac.) 9 Smart-arse 10 Radio 11 Larnaca 12 Empress 13 Mrs T 15 Skyscraper 18 Sniffer dog 19 Arch 22 Extract 24 Puritan 26 Egged 27 Treachery 28 Tenners 29 SNP.

DOWN: 1 Blair 2 Gotham 3 Barracker 4 Obese 5 Hard porn 6 Red Pepper 7 Sponsor 8/18dn. Asylum seekers 14 Skin-tight 16 Stop press 17 Off and on 18 (see 8) 20 Henry V 21 Bricks 23 Title 25 Twerp.

THOSE NEW BLAIR MEASURES IN FUEL

by Ben Zedrine

1. Oil companies to be forced to deliver petrol to retailers regardless of circumstances.

2. Oil bosses to face long jail sentences for failing to implement the above.

3. Gordon Brown to be held personally responsible for *Government's* loss of popularity.

4. Gordon Brown to face long jail sentence should he fail to cut petrol tax.

5. Army to be parachuted in to lift blockades at refineries.

6. SAS to have full powers to shoot Gordon Brown on sight.

7. Tony Blair to become popular again.

8. William Hague to become unpopular again.

9. Er...

10. That's it. Crisis over.

© T. Blair.

THE FRENCH
An Apology

IN COMMON with all other newspapers we recently made a number of unwarranted attacks on the French strikers, government and general public.

- **We suggested that the French lorry drivers were irresponsible, self-seeking anarchists and were acting in a fashion which had long been abandoned in modern Britain.**
- **We suggested the French Government was weak and spineless for subsequently giving in to their demand for fuel tax to be cut.**
- **We suggested the French populace were sentimental and typically Gallic in their deluded romantic attachment to mob rule.**

We now realise that the above were entirely untrue and accept that:

- **Like their heroic confrères across the channel, the British protestors have struck a proud blow for freedom and democracy.**
- **The British Government are spineless and feeble and should immediately give in to the protestors to lower the price of fuel.**
- **The British people have shown their true mettle in standing up to a repressive government and stockpiling as much milk as they could. *(Surely "making their voices heard"?)***

We apologise for any confusion caused to our readers by our earlier article.

DIRTY RAT SPLITS ON DI

by Our Royal Book Staff **Richard O. Kay-Magazine**

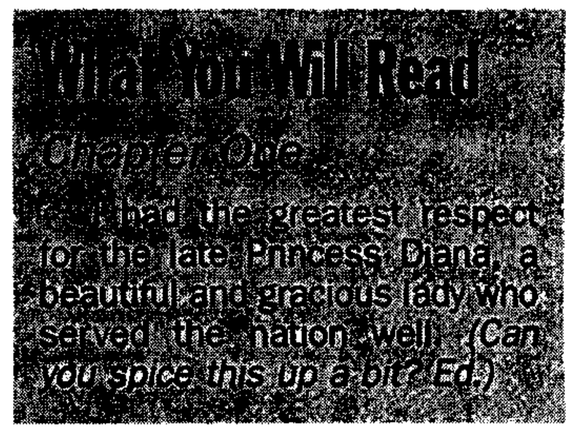
BUCKINGHAM Palace yesterday issued a furious denunciation of former Royal Personal Secretary Lieutenant Commander Patrick Judas-Smythe RN (Retired).

The Commander is believed to have received a six figure sum for writing a sensational behind-the-scenes account of his time working for the late Diana, Princess of Wales.

Judas-Smythe has sold the book to HarpicCollins (R. Murdoch prop.) and the serial rights to The Sunday Times (R. Murdoch also prop.).

The explosive revelations are due to send shockwaves through the British Establishment and may mean the end of the monarchy as we know it.

A police spokesman said, "He has betrayed a sacred trust and it will be particularly upsetting for the young princes who had no idea who their mother was or what she was like. Now they will be forced to confront the reality as spelled out by this snake in human form."


What You Will Read
Chapter One
I had the greatest respect for the late Princess Diana, a beautiful and gracious lady who served the nation well. (Can you spice this up a bit? Ed.)

Next week read more of Judas-Smythe's amazing revelations, including:

- **Diana and Charles did not get on very well.**
- **Diana had a secret affair with a man called Dodi Fayed.**
- **Prince Charles was rumoured to be in love with a married woman whose name was Camilla Parker-Bowles.**
- **Diana met an untimely end in a car crash in Paris, but this was hushed up by the Palace.**
- **This book is a complete waste of money but** *(That's enough revelations. Ed.)*

Why I will fight the next general election on tax

by William Hague

- Because I haven't got any other ideas and I might win on this one.

© World Copyright The Daily Telegraph

OLYMPIC GAMES

Exclusive to the Independent

Clive James

THE world's most famous Australian returns home to cover the event they call "Sydney 2000 Words".

Hedonism is the headline. This is the biggest party since Ned Kelly rode a kangaroo across Sydney Harbour and the young Clive James wanged his donger in the kedgeree. If you thought Australia was an old-fashioned place where blokes in funny hats throw Fosters on the barbie and down raw prawns by the tinnie then think again. The new Australia has become the greatest, happiest, most beautiful place to live in the world. That's why I live in England. *(Cont'd. p. 94)*

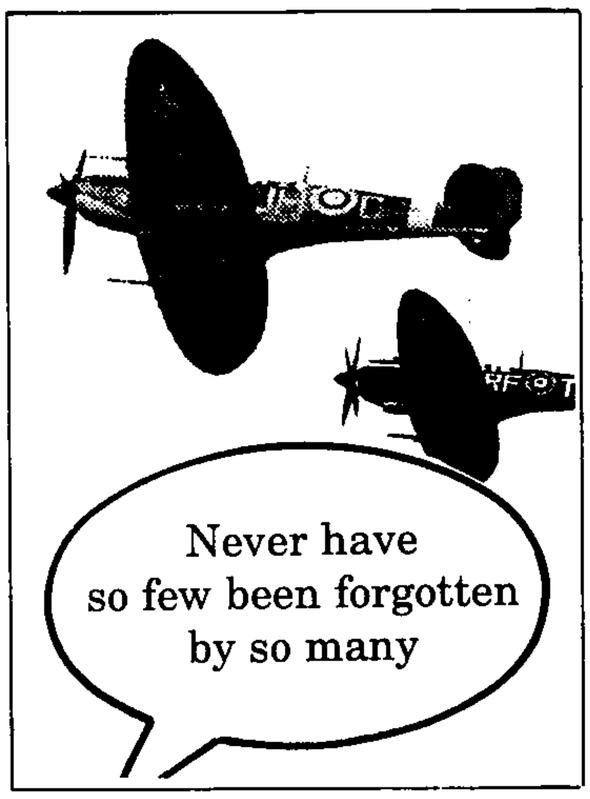
Exclusive to the Independent on Sunday and Sunday Telegraph

Kathy Lette

THE world's most famous Australian returns home to cover the event they call "Sydney 2000 Pounds".

Australians give good hedonism. In fact, they give the best hedonism in the world. They are way ahead on giving hedonism *(Get on with it. Ed.)*. Watching all those muscly athletes doing their stuff makes me want to join them in the breast stroke! Or the Phworr Hundred Metres! Or maybe the boys in the relay want to give me the Baton – all of them! Throw your javelin in my direction, mate! Is that a hammer in your lycra shorts or are you just pleased to see me?

The Australians certainly give great hedonism. That's why I live in England. *(Cont'd. p. 94)*



Exclusive to Everyone Else

Robert Hughes

THE world's most famous American returns home to cover the event they call "Sydney 2000 Expatriates Writing The Same Piece".

The Australian impulse towards the hedonistic is *(continued for ever)*

GLENDA SLAGG

A Personal Tribute to TV's Paula

SO the guttering candle that was the tragic Paula has finally been snuffed out. When I last saw her, she was rebuilding her life and coming off the drugs and the booze. She was proving to the world that she was at heart a truly caring, loving mother.

And now she has gone. And good riddance to her. The last thing you could call Paula was a caring, loving mother. When I last saw her, she had made no attempt to rebuild her life and was still on the drugs and the booze.

Yesterday the guttering candle was finally snuffed out. Surely now we should build a lasting memorial to the People's Paula — a dignified tribute to a woman who was famous for being famous and who, let's face it, does not deserve a memorial of any kind. *© G. Slagg*

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And a pretty angry "hullo" it is too!

This newsletter will be reaching you all rather late, since Mrs Roche, who delivers them, ran out of petrol on Wednesday.

And whose fault was that, may I ask? A tiny minority of selfish, irresponsible, and thoroughly selfish individuals whose only concern has been to get something for nothing!

They were prepared to stop at nothing to get it, however much they inconvenienced everybody else. They were quite happy to put at risk the lives of the frail, the elderly and toddlers.

I was shocked when I went into Tesco in the High Street and saw that the shelves were empty.

As a familiar voice put it to me from the check-out queue, "Give us this day our daily bread, Vicar. Isn't that your job? Well, where is it then?"

I thought this was pretty rich coming from someone who had filled his trolley to bursting with every conceivable type of loaf, including Cornish Soda Bread, the Wensleydale Cob and the Organic Ciabatta.

"Man cannot live by bread alone," I told him, quoting from the Book of Crises. "Quite right, Vicar," he said. "I must get the last of those baked beans as well."

Isn't this just typical of the mindless selfishness which seems to have swept through the whole parish in recent days, like some biblical plague of yore.

Many of you even seem to have expected me to give my blessing to this tiny minority of troublemakers just because the whole parish was silly enough to support them.

Well, let me tell you, in the words of Our Lady of Handbags, the Blessed Margaret, "The Vicar is not for turning"!

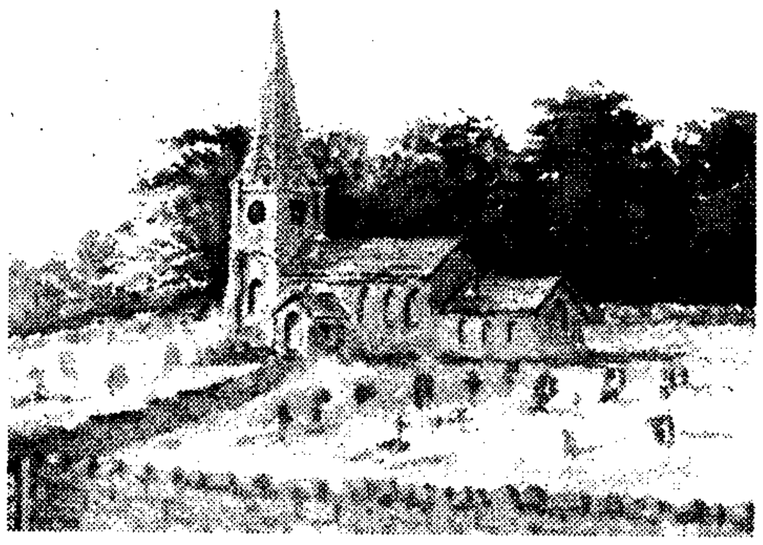
Listen, here is a parable which everyone in the parish should take to heart. It is the story of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, who in the Bible were confronted with a fuel crisis because the international price of oil had gone up by three times.

One lot of virgins, the wise ones, just stayed at home and did not exacerbate the situation.

But the foolish ones immediately rushed out and indulged in panic-buying to keep their lamps full of oil.

As a direct result of this action, toddlers' lives were put at risk. How selfish can you get?

So I hope that's given you all something to think about! It is lucky that on this occasion there was a happy ending, because someone, ie your Vicar,



was prepared to show a bit of moral leadership!

As soon as I made it clear that I was not prepared to tolerate this kind of conduct in the parish for even one more day, the whole thing fizzled out in just over a week. So much for the so-called crisis!

Yours more in anger than in sorrow,

Tony

PS. If any parishioner happens to have a spare can of Super Unleaded, may I remind them that "spreading the Good News" is an "emergency service"!

Harvest Festival

Our Harvest Festival service this year has been cancelled, as there is nothing left in the shops to bring in. And we certainly don't want to see any farmers, do we? T.B.

Millennium Tent Update

From P-Y Gerbil, Le Tent Supremo (ex)

Merde, alors! Quelle catastrophe! Le grand idiot milord Falconer, quel tosseur comme vous dites, a donné moi le "sack". Eh, pourquoi? No one, et je mean no one, pouvait faire un succes de cet miserable, useless tente! Un elephant blanc, si j'ever saw one! Naturellement, il etait un total floppe! Moi, j'accuse le milord Falconer, le "crony de Tony" comme vous dites. Il est le guilty homme. Sackez-lui, pas moi, pauvre petit Gerbil.

OK, j'ai perdu beacoup de millions de pounds donnés par le Parish lottery. Mais so what? Je ne regrette rien. Et, anyway, le tente est encore le meilleur value attraction touristique de tout le monde, beacoup plus interessant que Buckingham Palace, whatever votre Prince Charles may have dit!

So, venez, venez, venez, pendant my job lasts.

P-Y. Gerbil

P.S. Nous regrettons que le tente est fermé, due to leaks dans le roof.

Valete

It's farewell to **Mrs Mowlam**, known to some of you as "St Mo"! We're all very sad to lose someone who has contributed so much to the life of the parish in so many ways, many of them deeply unhelpful, which is why I had to ask her to leave. My fondest memory of Mo will be during the visit of our good friend, the Revd. William Clinton of the Church of the Seven Day Fornicators. While Bill and I were discussing important spiritual matters, Mrs Mowlam burst into my study waving a teapot shouting "I'm the new tea lady around here. Does anyone fancy a quick one?" And guess what? The Revd. Bill actually thought she meant something else! Which, knowing Mo, she probably did! Anyway, best wishes to Mrs Mowlam in whichever asylum she chooses to spend her remaining days! T.B.

From The Working Men's Club – An Announcement

I deeply regret to have to tell our members that as from midnight last night there was not a single drop of beer left in the club. I blame that bloody twit of a vic

We regret that Mr Prescott's announcement has been cut due to the fuel crisis. A.C.

Putting The Record Straight

I understand that one of our parishioners, a Mr Rawnsley, has been spreading unpleasant and malicious rumours about an alleged "feud" between myself and our treasurer, my friend Mr Brown. I do not intend to dignify Mr Rawnsley's tittle-tattle by giving further currency to such stories as

- Mr Brown coming round to the vicarage in the middle of the night screaming abuse about the collection plate
- Mr Brown and our former churchwarden hitting each other with hassocks in the vestry after evensong
- me suggesting that Mr Btown was "some sort of lunatic who needed professional help".

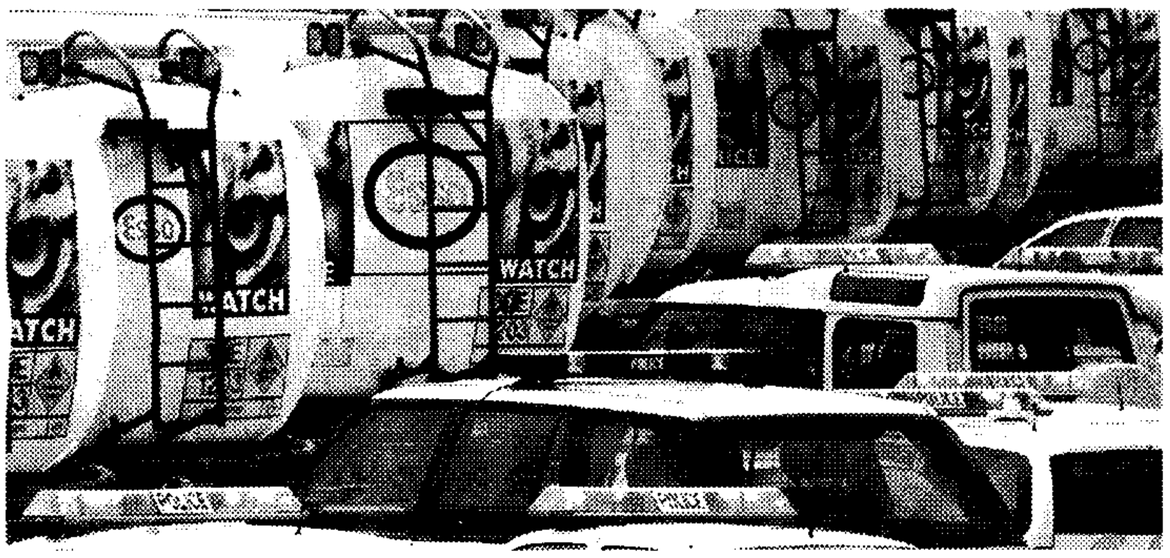
All of these stories may be true, but nothing is gained by Mr Rawnsley going round repeating them. He should be ashamed of himself (as should Gordon and Peter!). T.B.

"O ye of little fuel" *(BP Book of Shell 7.3)*

How the press covered the crisis

The Daily Lorrygraph
(incorporating the Daily Male Motorist) Friday, 22 September 2000

Heroic Strikers Hold Country to Ransom



BY OUR ENTIRE STAFF
CHARLES MOORESTRIKESPLEASE

BRITAIN was yesterday brought to its knees by courageous bands of picketing farmers, hauliers and taxi drivers.

Shouting "Smash the system!" and "Bring down the government!", these honest sons-of-toil won the backing of the entire country in their desire to pay less money for their petrol.

Hang Blair

IT IS a cause which has struck a thrilling chord in the hearts of every man, woman and child in Britain, millions of whom were yesterday cheering on the efforts of the ringleaders to reduce the entire nation to a state of complete chaos and misery.

The Daily Mailograph Says

MAKE no mistake. This is democracy in action. When the people speak, the government must listen . All of Britain's precious freedoms were won on the picket line, by brave men and women who believed in free petrol *(Surely "freedom"? Ed.)*. You only have to remember the Suffragettes, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the Poll Tax, the Peasants' Revolt, to see what can be done when the British people are finally stirred to action.

To the brave pickets, the Mailograph says "Britain salutes you".

Letters to the Editor

SIR – Am I the only one whose heart has rejoiced at the sight of miles of empty road, entirely free of cars. When I was driving along looking for a petrol station yesterday, the roads were gloriously free of gas-guzzling juggernauts and selfish women on school runs. And aren't the supermarkets wonderfully empty of food *(Surely "fellow-shoppers")*?

REGINALD GIMSON
Dimwittering, Sussex

SIR – Mr Blair and his cohorts will not defeat the British people, any more than did his forerunner Herr Hitler in the dark days of the Winter of Discontent. This morning when my neighbour stopped to offer me a lift to work, I was reminded of the spirit of the Blitz. On the train, instead of everyone reading the newspapers, we all took out our lap tops and wrote letters to you instead.

CARRIAGE B, the 7.14, Connex South East, Robertsbridge to Charing Cross (just passing the London Eye)

SIR – What is all this fuss about people getting to work? I had no problem at all yesterday since I am retired.

DAVID CASHEW-NUTT
Poujade-sur-Mer, France

SIR – Your readers may be interested to know how I got to my office yesterday. I began my journey at 4.32am on a pair of roller-blades borrowed from my daughter Emma. The second stage involved a micro-light aircraft flown by my neighbour, Wing Commander Dan Duxford DSC and Bar. This mode of transport was sufficient for me to arrive at Wallingford Station, in time to catch a motor cruiser which took me all the way down the Thames to Greenwich, from where the Docklands Light Railway delivered me to my desk at 5.32pm just in time to go home again.

MAURICE STREPSIL
The Old Pharmacy, Byfleet

SIR – Has Mr Blair considered turning his precious Dome into a service station?

MIKE GIGGLER
Via e-mail

Friday
September 22
2000
The Cardian

Irresponsible Hooligans Hold Country To Ransom

by Our Entire Staff
Polly Putthestrikersingaol

Britain was yesterday brought to its knees by a tiny clique of National Front-supporting Poujadiste owners of lorry firms and racist taxi drivers.

This criminal fringe is determined to overthrow the lawfully-elected Government of Mr Blair in defiance of the vast majority of law-abiding folk.

We Love Tony

There is no popular support whatever for these thugs and murderers in their wholesale assault on all civilised values.

It is high time that the police and SAS were sent in to smash these so-called secondary picketers once and for all.

The Cardian Says

We salute Mrs Thatcher in her crucial hour of need. It is time for the smack of firm government. Do they not realise that thousands of toddlers are starving in our hospitals, and millions of OAPs are dying of hypothermia in this Indian Summer of Discontent? We say hats off to Herr Mussolini who at least kept the trains running on time.

Letters

The selfish motorists who are whingeing about a few pence on the price of petrol are completely missing the point. Only when we have petrol costing thousands of pounds a litre will the future of the planet be assured. Mr Blair must stand firm and support the ozone layer.

Crispin de Greene
Tickell College, Oxford

Once again, totally predictably, the Tory media have scapegoated the government rather than the real villain of the piece, ie the multi-national companies working to their hidden agenda of globalism who are deliberately restricting the supply of oil in order to make more money by not selling it.

D. Spart
Editor, Living Globalism, Hackney

I am a nurse, my partner is a social worker and my brother is a teacher.

Sue Flutt
Salford

There is one blindingly obvious solution to the so-called fuel crisis. It involves using your legs. Walk, you lazy lot.

Dr Ranjit Rusbridger
Edinburgh

Has it occurred to Tony Blair to use his Dome as a lorry park?

Mike Giggler
Via e-mail

POLLY FILLER

and her sister PHILLIPA COLUMN go on a post-natal fitness regime

TAKE two girls. One is a hard-working, highly successful newspaper columnist. So is the other one. One has a useless partner and a lovable toddler. So has the other one. But there the similarities end. One has a dismal Croatian nanny who puts the goldfish in the washing machine, whereas the other has a miserable Latvian au-pair who puts the hamster in the microwave.

How would these "chalk-and-cheese" siblings react when put through their paces under fitness guru Dr Hugh Cares of the Hugh Cares Institute.

When we started I was a grumpy workaholic smoker who drank a little too much Chardonnay and perhaps ate out at the best restaurants in town more than I should!

Phillipa, on the other hand, was an irritable 40-a-day desk-lover who put away too much Pinot Grigio and ate one expensive pudding too many for comfort.

But our reactions were amazingly similar. After only one week of the fitness regime we had both turned the whole experience into highly entertaining columns in our respective newspapers.

"Thinner than ever, Polly," said my editor admiringly when I took in my copy.

Next week: Another member of Polly's family does something or other.

Government Attacks Hockney

by Our Arts Correspondent
Phyllis Tein

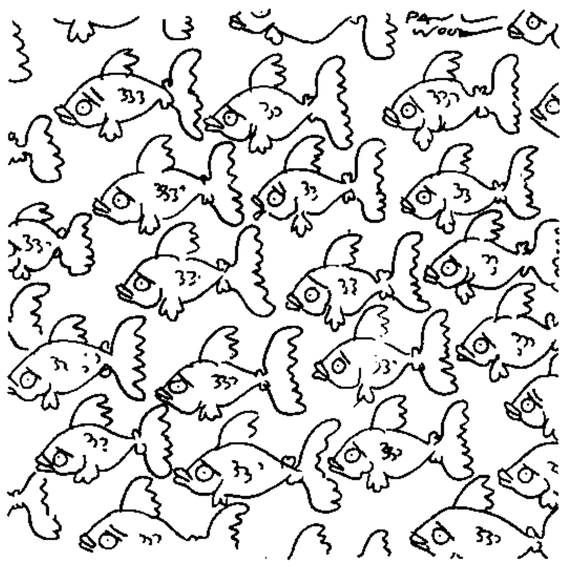
THE Labour Government launched an astonishing attack on the painter David Hockney today, whom they claimed was "dumbing down" Britain and making it "the laughing stock of the civilised world."

Said a spokesman in the October issue of Tatler magazine, "Hockney is just trying to be populist. You only have to look at his pictures to see how much he hates serious Art."

As examples he named the following pictures:

- *Boy In Los Angeles Swimming Pool* (1964)
- *Two Boys In Los Angeles Swimming Pool* (1966)
- *Nude Man In White Socks* (1972)
- *Nude Man In Shower* (1973)
- *Naked Boy In Grand Canyon* (1998)
- *Grand Canyon In Naked Boy* (Surely some mistake? Ed.)

He continued, "No one in Hockney's pictures puts on a proper suit and tie to meet the public. In fact, they don't put on any clothes at all and *(cont'd. p. 94)*



"Let's face it, the future is the net!"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Desmond Wilcox, broadcaster

So. Farewell then
Desmond Wilcox.

You made TV
Documentaries
And appeared in them.

But you were best known
For being
Esther Rantzen's
Husband.

That's Life. That was her
Most famous programme.

Man Alive. That was
Yours.

It is what Keith
Would call
Ironic.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

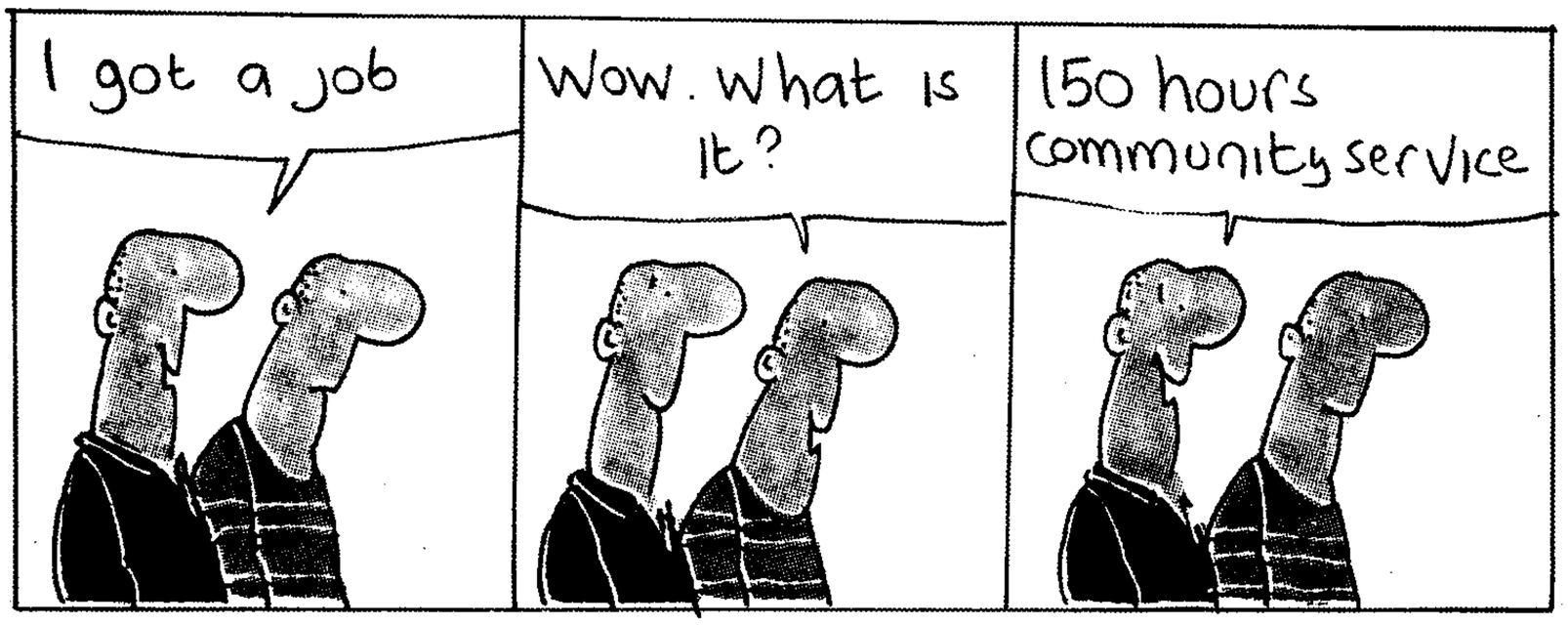
A Taxi Driver writes

Every week a well-known cab driver is invited to comment on an issue of topical importance.
THIS WEEK: The Fuel Crisis by **Ken Snotter**, Cab No. 613926

See those cabbies bringing London to a halt and holding the country to ransom? Brilliant, eh? Know what I'd do to those cabbies? Give 'em all a knighthood. That's the only sort of language they understand. Fantastic! You don't know anywhere round your way where I could get any diesel, do you guv? We just ran out. You'll have to walk the rest. I 'ad that Andrew Marr in the back once. 'e looks different on the telly.

NEXT WEEK: Paul Dacre (Cab No. 9386124) on what we have to learn from the French.

HUSBAND



OLYMPIC LATEST

TRIUMPH FOR BRITAIN

DESMOND Noggis, a Harlesden dentist, picked up the Bronze Medal in the Under-water 200 metre Clay Pigeon Shooting, but was told to put it back by officials because he hadn't won it. *(Reuters)*

PANIC AS FUEL STORIES DRY UP

by Our Energy Staff
Petrolella Wyatt

THERE were scenes of mass hysteria in Britain's newsrooms as the supply of stories of fuel shortages began to peter out.

The first signs were in Canary Wharf where desperate journalists were seen fighting over a story about a man in a Volvo losing his temper in a petrol station queue near Guildford. Said one gloomy editor, "By the end of the week there will be no petrol stories at all. The papers will be empty. Fleet Street will grind to a halt."

But a newspaper expert, Roy Greenparty, said "The papers have only themselves to blame. They have all been rushing to fill up their news pages with petrol stories with no thought for the future."

Bottom of Barell

He continued: "Now ordinary papers like the Telegraph will have to find alternative means to get through the week. And let's be honest, the occasional delivery of a picture of Liz Hurley without any clothes on is not going to satisfy anyone."

ON OTHER PAGES

Army to be sent into Daily Mail 2-94

"Bloody hell, Ronnie, what did I say about mowing round the living dead?"

POLICE 'TOOK NO ACTION' DURING PETROL CARNIVAL

by Our Home Affairs Staff
Phil Tank

THE police were accused of standing idly by during last week's Stopping Oil Festival, while revellers openly flouted the law and many acts of violence occurred.

But the organisers of the festival, who wished to remain nameless, said "everyone had a great time. The sun shone, the party-goers sang and danced and talked to Radio 4 reporters, and the police fully entered into the spirit of the occasion."

Last night the Home Office admitted that the police had turned a blind eye to many breaches of law and order, and said the Government was considering banning any future repetition of the carnival.

Unleaded Bliss

"The only alternative," said a spokesman, "is to move the festival back to France where it came from. It is not part of our tradition or culture and it ties up the police when they could be doing something more useful like giving each other anti-racism lectures."

MILLENNIUM DAME TO BE SCRAPPED

by Our Political Staff
Andrew Marrvellous

THE symbol of New Labour is to be pulled down after the Government conceded that "it has no viable future".

The Millennium Dame was designed to be the most popular attraction in the whole of Britain, and was enthusiastically supported by the Government.

Mowlemmium Experience

The Dame, as it became known, was acclaimed by the Prime Minister as new, modern, exciting, touchy-feely and "guaranteed to produce the Wow Factor".

Tony Blair even promised that the Dame would last for twenty-five years.

But the popularity failed to materialise and a whispering campaign in the media branded the Dame "a flop".

Word of mouth spread and soon people were openly critical of the so-called "One Amazing Mo".

"It is all presentation," said one critic (a Mr P. Mandelson from Hartlepool). "There is no content at all. It's boring, lacking in ideas and it doesn't work."

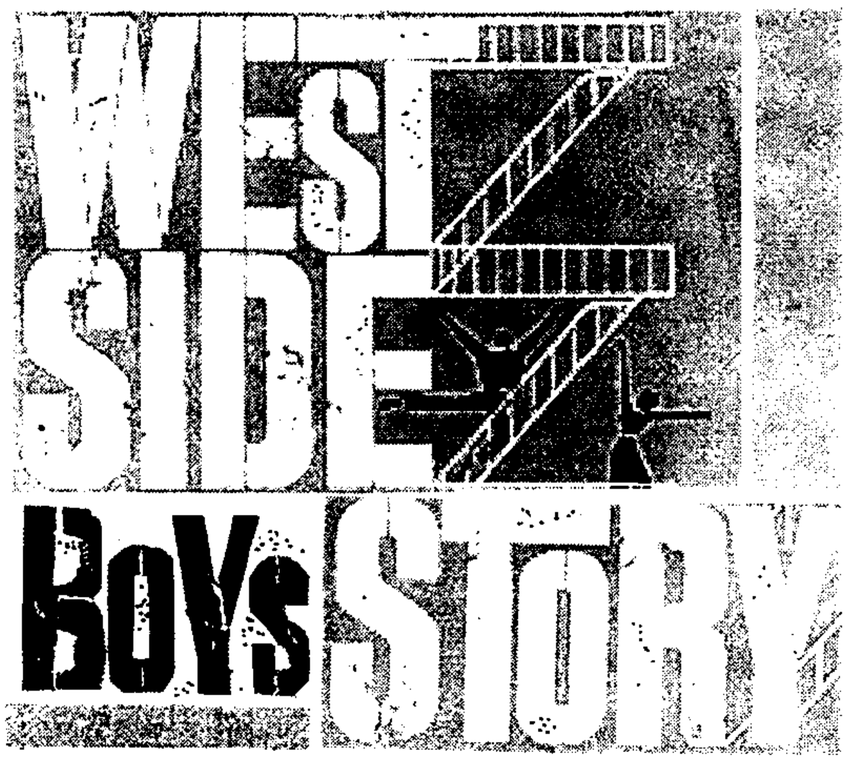
Disaster Zone

He continued, "The Dame was in the wrong place at the wrong time – ie, in my way. Let's scrap it now and get it over with."

The Dame is to be bought by businessman Rupert Murdoch who plans to turn her into a book.

ROY of the BLUES
MELCHESTER'S CHAIRMAN AND HIS ITALIAN MANAGER ARE NOT GETTING ON...
I WANT RESULTS
OK BOSS. HERE'S FOUR TROPHIES INCLUDING THE F.A. CUP
TOGL
YOU'RE FIRED
WHY?
BECAUSE THAT'S THE RESULT I WANT!
COME ON YOU BLUESERS!
US TOO!
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO BE SENT OFF!
COOPER

ROBIN COOK presents

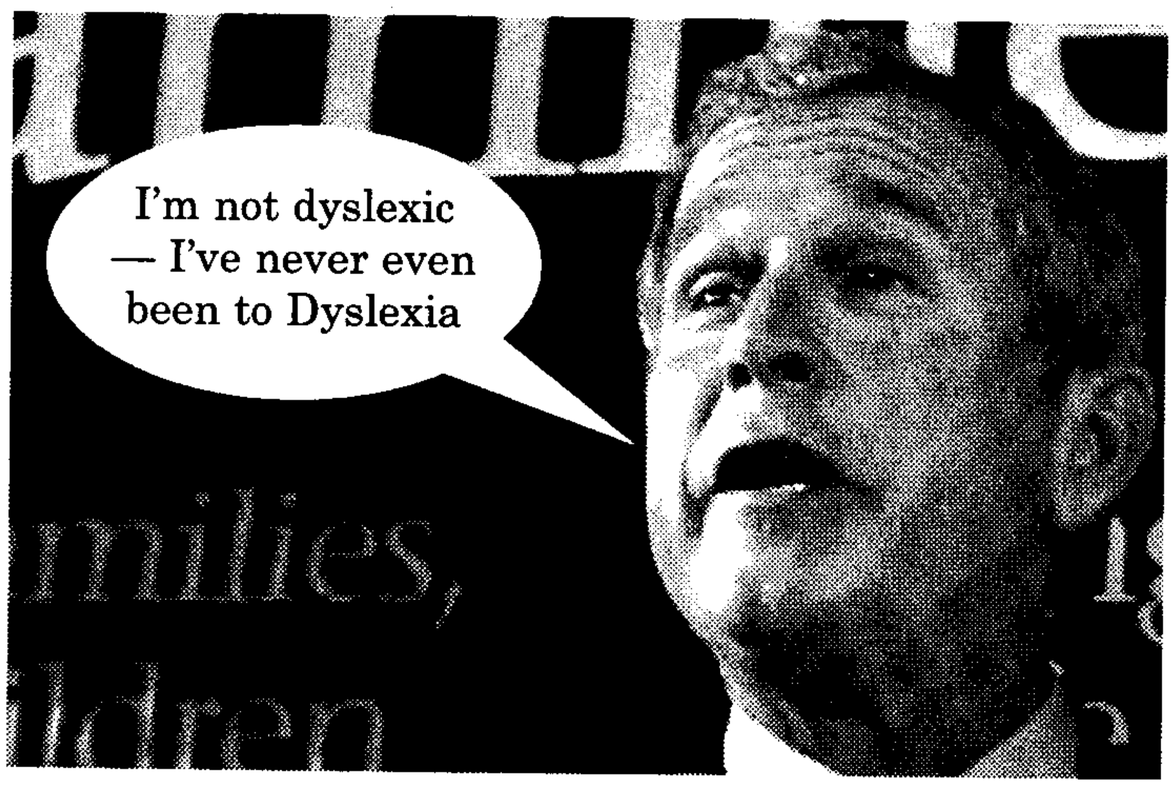


♪♪ THE MUSICAL ♪♪

SET in downtown Sierra Leone, Lee and Enfield's classic musical centres on the bloody feud between two rival gangs – the Sharks and the Paras.

Hit songs include • **I Want To Live In West Africa** • **Gee Peace-Keeping Officer N'Krupkee** • **I Feel Pretty (Homicidal Tonight)** • **I've Just Shot A Girl Called Maria** *(That's enough songs. Ed.)*

GEORGE W. BUSH – NEW SHOCK



OLYMPIC DRUG SHOCK

by Our Olympics Correspondent **Anna Bolic-Steroid**

THE entire Olympic movement reacted with shock and dismay today after a leading athlete arriving in Sydney was found not to be taking drugs.

"I stupidly thought I could win by sticking to the rules," said the disgraced star. "I now accept that training hard and eating sensibly was not the way to win and that I've let everyone from my pharmacist to my drug dealer down."

While insisting incidents such as this were rare, Olympic officials conceded that occurrences such as this one potentially undermine the Olympic ideals of cheating, greed and big business sponsorship and soon all everyone will be left with is a sporting event.

TV HIGHLIGHTS

I Love The Seventies
BBC2 (Sat 9.00pm)
Britain's truckers and farmers present a nostalgic tribute to those crazy days of Summer 1979 as industrial action humiliates a Labour Government, bringing Britain to a near standstill.

Big Brother
Channel 4
On tonight's show, Big Brother (Tony), aided by "Nasty" Peter and "Even Nastier" Alastair complete the team task of having their flirty friend Mo evicted. However, all the evidence points to the fact that she's far more popular than anyone left in the House.

Late News
BBC Shake-Up
Peter Salmon has promised he'll bring the same up-market approach to his new job as "Head of BBC Sport" that he did to the schedules as controller of BBC1.

"Highlights to look forward to in the coming months include Carole Smillie's 'Changing Dressing Rooms', Rolf Harris's 'Vets In Football Practice' and endless repeats of 'classic' FA cup finals from the 1970s, said a senior BBC... (cont'd. p. 94)

THE PEOPLE'S PEERAGE
You Decide Who Should Be A Member Of The House Of Lords

- ☐ Richard Branson
- ☐ Michael Parkinson
- ☐ Denise van Outen
- ☐ Mad Frankie Fraser
- ☐ John Cleese
- ☐ Nasty Nick
- ☐ Brooklyn Beckham
- ☐ WWF Wrestling's The Rock
- ☐ S Club 7
- ☐ Harry Potter
- ☐ Lord Melvyn Bragg *(Shome mishtake?)*

NB *Runners-up will present BBC1's new-look People's Panorama!!*

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

Art can't shock any more! Take 'Apocalypse' at the Royal Academy. Squashed Popes, grotesque sadism from Jake and Dinos Chapman, as per usual...
Been there, done that.
Have you heard? Saatchi's given away loads of our work to provincial art galleries!
Aaaaagh!!

As we join our favorite cuddly friends, Winnie the Poof, Piglet, Owl, Kanga, Roo, Rabbit and the ever-exuberant Tigger,

Kuwait Airlines in-flight magazine

BRADFORD: Malcolm Dyson has been appointed as the new honorary representative for the Bradford branch of the associated Boars of the Royal schools of Music.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

BIG BROTHER SHOCK

ADAM AND EVE VOTED OUT

by Our Paradise Staff
Jenny Siss

IN A shock climax to the sociological experiment that the whole of creation has been watching, the likeable Adam and the flirty Eve were sensationally cast out by a panel of viewers (God).

Adam and Eve had been living in the Garden for months and had been set a number of simple tasks – naming the animals, delving and spinning and not eating the apple.

Eve's Dropping

But they failed at the last challenge and ate the apple egged on by the Machiavellian "Nasty Old Nick".

The viewer (God) saw Nick pretending to be a serpent (against the rules) and persuading Eve to have a bite.

She and Adam then became involved in steamy scenes, including a sensual massage, snogging and uninhibited "begetting" under the tree of knowledge.

Channel Fall

But the audience (God) had had enough of their antics and voted them both out of Eden.

Said a disappointed God, "They're all ghastly and selfish. All they think about is sex. They have failed utterly."

Said Eve last night, "Obviously,

I'm gutted. I was never given a chance. I blame Nasty Old Nick for ruining my chance of winning the top prize of eternal life."

The couple have now sold their stories for an undisclosed sum to the Old Testament.

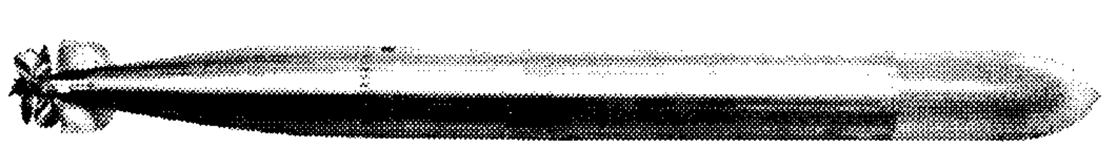
"Hi! I'm Mike and I'm addicted to group therapy"

EYE THEATRE GUIDE

They Flew To Bruges

Wartime film classic now comes to the stage, courtesy of impresario Bill Copyright. Eddie Izzard takes over the David Niven role of Squadron Leader "Chalky" Spottiswode, torn between his duty to his country and his love for Belgian resistance heroine Mlle "Fifi" Legovaire (played by Liz Hurley, nearly baring all) in the original Jean Simmons role. Brilliant use of William Walton's original wartime score, *Biggin Hill Ho!* "Don't 'scramble' to see this one!" says Sheridan '40 Winks' Morley. "Wait till Christmas when it will be shown at 1.25am on Bank Holiday Eve."

101 Things You Can Mistake For A Paedophile



No. 2. A Tor-paedo

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

PEOPLE POWER
THINGS CAN ONLY GET BITTER
TOP OF THE WORLD MA!
MR BLAIR YOU HAVE 53 DAYS BEFORE WE ARE BACK
IT WASN'T YOU LOT WHO BOUGHT THE COUNTRY TO ITS KNEES IT WAS US!
GLOBAL TRUCKING--
THAT'S A BLAIR FACED LIE
OH, YER, YOU AND WHOSE PEACEFUL PICKETS!
I DONT THINK BLAIR WOULD THINK I WAS VERY REFINED
OIL REFINERY
HOW'RE WE GOING TO KEEP THEM DOWN ON THE FARM NOW THAT THEYVE SEEN FARMERS PROTESTING NEAR PAREE
MAYBE WE SHOULD NAME AN' SHAME MEMBERS OF OPEC
MY OLD LADY SAID THAT I MAY HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT THE COLLAPSE OF LABOUR BUT I STILL HAVE TO SLEEP IN THE SPARE ROOM!
IT'S A FUNNY OLD WORLD, MY FATHER WAS A FLYING PICKET BACK IN THE 70s COAL STRIKE
YOUR BEHAVING LIKE MRS THATCHER REALLY TURNS ME ON, DORIS
GET US ON THE INTERNET people.power @sorted.co. UK.
SO IT'S AGREED. WE BLACK SAUDI ARABIA FOR OUR NEXT SUMMER HOLIDAY
BUT I DIDN'T DO A THING
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OFFICER...
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN
POLICE
HEATH

DIARY

Ringo: It's hard to remember now but basically we had this car, well it was more of a lorry. A small lorry. Somewhere inbetween a small lorry and a car.

George: A van. We had this van. In some of the history books historians may say it was a small lorry but that's historians for you. Bullshit. Total bullshit. It was a van.

Ringo: In those days, you had to like stop for petrol when your tank ran out. By tank, I don't mean it was a tank. Not a real tank. It wasn't. It was more of a van. But it had a tank for the petrol. These days, no one worries about petrol. Cars are chauffeur-driven. but this was the early Sixties.

George: We thought we were going to run out of petrol because we'd forgotten to fill it up.

Paul: Running out of petrol! A lot of madness went on in that van! As usual, it was yours truly who noticed the arrow was near to empty, and it nearly did me in. I thought, "Whoa, this could be it. We could run out of petrol, man", so I'm like "Right guys – we've got to stop at the next petrol station".

Ringo: It was like, we almost ran out of petrol. Bloody touring lark! But we didn't because there was a petrol station just round the corner. It was pretty far out. I remember thinking something. But it was a long time ago, and I forget what.

Paul: This lyric came into my head like from out of nowhere, and I couldn't get it out. "Van, van, van – c'mon baby, let's drive my van". A real old rocker. Originally, it had a verse about nearly running out of petrol, but there's like no rhyme for petrol.

Ringo: 'cept "metal". And "kettle".

Paul: In the past, John's taken all the credit for "Van" and I kept shtum about it for some time but historically it was mine and that's a fact. Sorry, John! Sorry, old mate!

George: The thing about being in a van is, like, it's basically on wheels. Not like a house, say, or –

Ringo: A wheelbarrow. A wheelbarrow's not on *wheels*. It's like just got the one.

George: What I mean is in a van you're never still, you're always going. Unless you've stopped, of course. Traffic lights, parking, blah, blah.

Ringo: Or for a pee. Or stopped for a pee. One

THE BEATLES ANTHOLOGY

of the all-time great Beatles peeing-by-the-side-of-the-road stories happened when –

George: What I want to say about being in a van is that, it's, like, "Hey, I'm *IN* this van, but the van isn't like IN ME". And that's an amazing level of consciousness to be at. All the rest is just bullshit, just bullshit. All the governments and all the people running around the planet doing whatever they're doing. It's just a total waste of time. Or that's what I remember thinking at the time. At least it's what I *remember* remembering thinking, but now I've like mainly forgotten.

Paul: So when it came to recording "Van" we were in the studio, and the others were kind of sitting around and that, and I'm like, "Hey, guys, let's get this whole thing on the road," but whaddyaknow, I'm like as usual the only one who's got his act together, so I just record it by myself. *(Sings:)* "Oooh, van, van, van. C'mon, baby, let me be your va-a-a-an!" And it's like an instant classic, the song everyone remembers from that year. And I'm happy that the others got the credit for it, but sometimes, I'm like "Hey, guys, hang on – let's not forget who really did it?!" Yeah! Rock 'n' roll! Wooh!

George: That's just Paul's way, really. He has this way of, I mean, like telling what he wants to tell and I'm not blaming him for that because though over the years it may have kind of annoyed us, I think we're used to it. But for the history books it's best that people know it was me who was inspired to write a song about that van and not just that van but all vans everywhere, even the vans that aren't yet vans but are like, just bits of metal not yet stuck together, or like vans-to-be. And like out of nowhere I wrote this song, "Van Vanu Vishnu Van" and round the time of the Double White I recorded it with just this sitar and this cushion in the middle of this great empty space. And it totally knocked me out. But the others said the Double White was too short to include it on. They were often like that, and I'm like, "I've had it up to here, man".

Paul: But fair's fair, we always let him have his three minutes on each album, and he'd already like used them up. But that's our Georgie boy! Sense of humour needed here you know! Bless him!

George: So I later put the 23 minute version on my triple solo concept album, and now every day I have Beatle historians come up and tell me it's better than anything the Beatles ever did together, so I'm like reconciled. It's like a that-was-then-and-this-is-now kind of thing.

Ringo: Another great van story was when George and Paul were both planning to drive the van I don't know where, it was definitely somewhere, but that's not the point of the story, the point is they couldn't find the keys anywhere! It was pretty far out, because in those days no one ever lost the keys to anything. Especially not a van. So after looking around for them for two or three minutes – a lot of time in those days – we eventually found them, I forget where. And so we set off to where we were going. And I guess we must have got there, because I'd remember if like for some reason we never. Classic!

George: Ringo had his sixth shag in the back of that van.

Ringo: My seventh. I've often seen it referred to as my sixth but it wasn't. It was my seventh.

Paul: We sat round looking at them, 'cos Ringo and this bird were like having it off over the bit with the spare wheel in it and we'd had a puncture so we had to wait and we thought we might as well watch. Donovan watched too. People like that. Billy Fury. Freddie and the Dreamers. The Swinging Blue Jeans. They all watched. You see, it was the Sixties.

Ringo: I took LSD in that van. It blew my mind. I looked round and thought "Hey! This is a van!" and then I woke up and it was. I've never thought the same about anything ever again. Was it a van? It was somewhere between a car and a small lorry. I'd guess you'd call it a van. John would've known.

George and Paul: John who?

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

BLOOMIN' ARTICLE HERE SAYS I'M KNOWN FOR MANY THINGS BUT NOT FOR MY INTELLIGENCE!
THEY'RE SAYING I'M THICK, JOHNSON!
SURELY NOT, SIR.
IF THIS JOURNALIST HAD DONE HIS HOMEWORK HE'D KNOW THAT I'VE GOT A DOCTORATE FROM HARVARD AND A DEGREE FROM CAMBRIDGE!
THEY'RE HONORARY QUALIFICATIONS, SIR.
EXACTLY. IT WAS AN HONOUR TO HAVE MY INTELLECT RECOGNISED.

Literary Review

Serial killers

Life In The Jungle
Michael Heseltine
(Hodder & Stoughton, £20)
Mo Mowlam
Julia Langdon
(LittleBrown, £16.99)
Servants Of The People
Andrew Rawnsley
(Hamish Hamilton, £17.99)

THERE'S an old pirate saying that the dead tell no tales. But, in the world of political publishing, that's quite untrue. The two best books in that genre this year are respectively about and by corpses: a new biography of Richard Nixon by Anthony Summers and the second volume of *Alan Clark's Diaries*.

The manuscripts which feature the living are rather less thrilling. Michael Heseltine has the twin handicaps for a political memoirist of being obsessively private and a dyslexic. The attachment to his book *Life In The Jungle* of the journalist Anthony Howard — one of the most distinguished ghosts since Hamlet's father — might solve the second problem but even Howard can do nothing about the first.

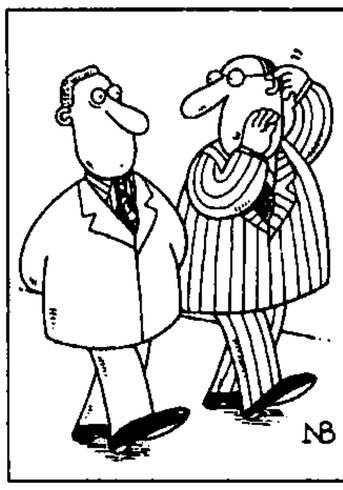
Heseltine's manner with an anecdote is first to deflate expectation and then to flatten it. Overthrowing Maggie was far less exciting than it might have seemed on TV. The IRA mortar attack on Number 10 "was in a sense all over before it started. We heard a loud bang..." His coronary in Venice merits a few flat sentences: "I realised that something was more seriously adrift. By this time Anne was awake. I asked her to call a doctor."

On the day after the 1997 election defeat, he took a lengthy telephone call from John Major but sadly can remember nothing of the contents. Howard knew that Heseltine was a dyslexic but the complete amnesia must have come as a shock. The most colourful leading politician of recent times has insisted on a monochrome volume to preserve his mystery. There are no malicious anecdotes about Margaret Thatcher — just dreary lists of her constitutional solecisms — although Hezza certainly knows some.

The two big books of the autumn by political journalists — Julia Langdon's biography of Mo Mowlam and Andrew Rawnsley's *Servants Of The People*, a story of Blair-Brown-Mandy and other New Labour feuds — are both still embargoed but have been heavily serialised. If they prove to contain anything decent not so far printed in the press, then the features editors will be sacked.

The newspaper extracts were disappointing and showed the extent to which political writing in Britain is hampered by the libel laws and the elaborate courtesies of the lobby system. The advance buzz had been that each book would contain one crucial unmasking: Rawnsley revealing the source of his story about a government rubbishing of Gordon Brown as "psychologically flawed"; Langdon naming the organiser of the Number 10 whispering campaign against Mo Mowlam.

In fact neither revelation appears. Langdon was warned off by lawyers while Rawnsley would lose all credibility as a journalist if he broke the code of *omerta* relating to off-the-record quotes. There are also gaps and tactful blurrings in the accounts of some of Mowlam's romantic entanglements. While Heseltine has been reticent by temperament, Rawnsley and Langdon have been forced to withhold by the system.



"Between you and me, the whispering campaign is all in you-know-who's mind"

These works reveal a crisis in political publishing. When Harold Evans at the *Sunday Times* pioneered the book serialisation, the deal benefited publishers (who offset their costs with Fleet Street money), authors (who were paid and publicised twice) and the newspapers, who got stories without doing any reporting and raised their sales by association with high-profile titles.

Much of this still applies but a serial used to be a taster of a book. Now — as editors become better at filleting — it's increasingly the whole meal. Sensible readers have long since realised that all of the best bits appear in the serial and can be had for the couple of quid it takes to buy a Sunday paper two weeks running rather than the £20 for a hardback.

It's now only the vanity of politicians — who see a fat hardback as the equivalent of a statue — which keeps the political memoir going. Surely it cannot be long before newspapers cut out the lunches and negotiations and simply buy up a failed statesman direct for a series written by one of their hacks.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS Pt 94...

All Hail The New Puritans
(Fourth Estate, £10)

The Pledge

This manifesto and the fifteen stories that follow it are intended to show how incredibly important British fiction is. Make no mistake, it is incredibly important. It is the most exciting in the world. Gosh.

The Principles

As story-tellers we believe in writing stories.

As prose writers, we write in prose.

Textual simplicity and grammatical purity are in.

Rhetoric is out. As for repetition, we're against it, we don't like it, it's not our bag and we won't put up with it.

The First Story

"He hated the thing he luvved. He did not give a fuck about it. It was becos he didn't not give a fuck that he was fucked. Um. When he'd finished masturbating *(That's enough exciting and important British fiction. Ed.)*

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ LAST WEEK the Daily Mail entertained its readers with extracts from Lynda Lee-Potter's new book. The fragrant doyenne of the Glendas was said to have written a "brilliantly perceptive" study revealing that "Britain is still a class-ridden nation". Its title: Class Act.

This may have caused a slight frisson of *déjà vu* for Stephen Pollard, a pundit at the rival *Express*. Three years ago he and Andrew Adonis (the inaccurately named ex-*Observer* hack who now works for Tony Blair) co-authored a book arguing that Britain was, er, still a class-ridden nation. Its title: *A Class Act*.

■ IT LOOKS as if Oxford University Press may finally lose the spurious charitable status and consequent tax exemption it has enjoyed internationally since the late 1970s (much to the annoyance of its purely commercial competitors) with the Indian department of taxation (IDT) having won the first stage of its legal battle to make OUP pay like any other business.

The Press has appealed to the supreme court in Delhi and engaged an eminent counsel to argue its case. However, it is already clear that it will have a fight on its hands, as the IDT is being assisted by one Andrew Malcolm (see Eyes passim).

Malcolm spent five ultimately successful years pursuing the Press through the courts for breach of contract after it went back on a commitment to publish his philosophy book *Making Names*, and so is not the type to give up easily.

OUP boss Henry Reece must now wonder if his predecessors could have saved him a lot of trouble simply by publishing Malcolm's book all those years ago.

■ PERHAPS it should have been obvious that the writing was on the wall for Gollancz when Orion trade md Malcolm Edwards announced a couple of months ago that the imprint was being "restructured". The company was looking for a single publisher/md figure to replace editorial director Mike Petty and commissioning editor Sara Holloway, who were being made redundant.

Despite Edwards' best efforts, no one has been appointed and now — in a fit of enthusiasm for "branding" — his boss Anthony "Fatty" Cheetham has ordered that the once-distinctive and diverse Gollancz should produce only science fiction, while the rest of the catalogue moves to Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Petty's departure, though regrettable, was sweetened by the offer of a consultancy role and the fact that he was anyway thinking of ditching the 9-to-5 life to go freelance. In contrast, the handling of Holloway's exit was more distasteful. Despite being very well regarded as an editor by her authors, Holloway was offered a risible and non-negotiable pay-off. Initially told she would have a month's notice to arrange her affairs, she was shocked to be informed on arrival at work soon after that she was to clear her desk immediately and go on "gardening leave".

REMAINS OF THE DAY

■ THE prince of literary haven Hay-on-Wye, Richard Booth, was so unimpressed by recent hardback sales of Beardie's autobiography, *Losing My Virginity*, that he decided to give copies away free with other purchases until stocks ran out.

'Bookworm'

IN THE BACK

LOCKERBIE: MALTESE DOUBLE CROSS

FOR nearly all the 12 years since a bomb blew to pieces a Pan Am airliner above Lockerbie in Scotland, killing 270 people, the *Eye* has been asking the following questions:

1 Why did the initial suspects for the bombing — a Palestinian terrorist group hired by Iran to arrange a revenge for the shooting down by the American navy in the summer of 1988 of an Iranian airliner in the Gulf — suddenly vanish from the scene in 1991?

2 How and why were they replaced as chief suspects by an apparently unrelated plot originating in Libya?

3 Could the switch in suspects have been inspired by political priorities in Washington and the CIA?

4 Were these priorities set by the 1991 Gulf War, in which Syria, previously regarded as a hostile state with terrorist inclinations, suddenly became a crucial ally of the US in the war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq?

5 Did the US and British governments shelter behind the refusal of the Libyan government to release the two suspects named in the US indictment in 1991, claiming for eight years that this refusal pointed to the two men's guilt?

6 In summary, has US intelligence, supported by its British equivalents, consistently hoodwinked the relatives of the Lockerbie dead with a cock-and-bull story manufactured by the CIA in the exclusive interests of US foreign policy?

Some answers to these questions have now begun to emerge at the trial in Holland of the two Libyan suspects.

The whole idea of a trial on neutral territory was originally and vociferously opposed by the US and British authorities, who agreed to the idea only under pressure from Third World countries, especially from Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa.

The US government refused to agree to the trial unless two officials from the US justice department attended the trial, sat with prosecution lawyers and daily briefed the relatives of the US citizens who died at Lockerbie. So far, despite prodigious efforts, the prosecution has failed to establish that any bomb went on a feeder flight for Pan Am flight 103 from Malta, or that timers for the bomb were sold to Libya, or that in either case either of the two suspects was involved.

Looming over the whole prolonged and expensive proceedings has been the promised appearance of the prosecution's star witness — the man on whom the indictment was based. This witness, doubters were assured, would clear up the matter once and for all. He had worked for Libyan intelligence at Malta's airport and would be able to provide clear evidence linking the suspects to the planting of a bomb on a Maltese feeder flight to Frankfurt.

This witness has now been identified as Abdul Majid Razkaz Salam Giaka, who has not been interviewed by the Dumfries and Galloway police — theoretically the prosecution's investigators into the biggest mass murder in British criminal history. Under Scottish law, however, the witness had to be made available for interview by the defence. Before they were allowed to see Giaka, defence lawyers were blindfolded. To make doubly sure, Giaka insisted on wearing an extravagant disguise, including make-up and a female wig.

The lawyers have found out that Giaka had defected to the CIA in 1989, but at the time of his defection said nothing about the Lockerbie bombing a few months previously. It was not until early 1991, as the Desert Storm bombers started their attack on Baghdad, and Syrian involvement in the United Nations effort against Iraq became crucial, that Giaka, now safe under a witness protection scheme in the US, disclosed his evidence against his two former colleagues.

The important fact is that at the moment of the switch of Lockerbie suspects, the CIA had at its disposal a man who claimed to have defected from Libyan intelligence (though at the time of his defection he forgot to mention his alleged evidence about Lockerbie). Giaka is paid $1,000 a month and stands to make another $4m as a reward if the defendants are convicted.

The trial has now been postponed until 21 September pending legal arguments about the disclosure of CIA cables relating to Giaka. The cables released to the defence have been heavily edited and censored. The prosecution argue that this censorship is crucial to the security of the United States — an argument which has not gone down well with the presiding judge, Lord Sutherland.

It may well be that the CIA will refuse to release the edited versions, in which case the prosecution will be obliged not to call its star witness, and the charges will have to be dropped. This could be the best possible alternative for the prosecution and for both British and US governments who are not looking forward to a full exposition of the defence case. Defence lawyers have amassed a large quantity of highly damaging information about the role of the CIA and British intelligence in the switching of suspects for the bombing.

The not very fly guys BAA

ONE of the more exciting arguments used by the monopoly British Airports Authority (BAA) for a fifth terminal at Heathrow was that the new demand for air travel could be accommodated with only a small increase in flights.

Bigger and better organised aeroplanes, BAA forecast, would result in big increases in passengers but only small increases in the number of planes. A new terminal at Heathrow, therefore, would provide facilities for many more passengers but people who lived in the area would not be inconvenienced by many more flights.

At an early stage in the public inquiry into the proposals for a new terminal, the protestors, HACAN (Heathrow Airport Campaign Against Noise), argued that this was demonstrable rubbish, and that BAA's experts knew it was rubbish. BAA's forecast of 57 million flights by 2000 was, said HACAN, a hopeless underestimate. The actual figure, they forecast, would be 63 million. Well the inquiry took much longer than expected and we now have the actual figure for flights in 2000: 63 million, exactly what HACAN predicted, but a cool six million more than BAA's forecast.

Dermot Cox of HACAN tells the *Eye*: "BAA's aviation experts were perfectly capable of producing accurate forecasts. But their job was to produce figures to support Sir John Egan's grandiose hopes for Terminal 5. They thought the inquiry would be over and the terminal built before their under-estimates were exposed. Now their case was been fatally discredited. Their claims that they can build a new terminal without a significant increase in flights, noise and air traffic control problems are shown to be hollow."

Roy Vandermeer QC, who conducted the inquiry, is expected to hand in his report soon. If he comes out in favour of the new terminal, it will be built. But if he comes out against it, he will present secretary of state John Prescott with an appalling dilemma. Honest John won't want to countermand his own appointed inspector. On the other hand, he adores BAA, and has been promising it a new terminal ever since he met BAA directors on the afternoon after the 1997 general election.

LEGAL AIDING... AND ABETTING

WHAT NEWS of the inquiry by the legal aid board (LAB) into the way cowboy lawyers have exploited vulnerable asylum seekers in a multi-million pound legal aid scam?

Lord chancellor Lord Irvine announced the inquiry by the board (now the legal services commission) last year. And although its detailed findings have not been published, the LAB has confirmed that some unscrupulous law firms were giving false advice, overcharging by up to 50 percent, carrying out unnecessary work and touting for trade purely for profit. Asylum seekers were being left at risk — although some luckier ones were later able to have the damage to their case repaired by decent and respected immigration firms.

Ministers were told that about 50 law firms had been rumbled. But only three London firms were closed down by the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors, the trade regulatory body. The new legal services commission (LSC) is now seeking to recover around £2m from them through the civil courts. It also substantially reduced the immigration legal bills of several other firms. No criminal charge has been brought.

It is widely accepted that these cases were only the tip of an iceberg, but the inquiry by the board fell far short of a full audit. Of the hundreds of firms involved, the books of only about 80 were examined. The board did conclude, however, that the sudden two-year hike in immigration legal aid from £26m to nearly £50m "is a reflection of a significant increase in poor quality, ill supervised and sometimes completely unnecessary work" rather than a true reflection of need.

It appears there is a fine line between being dishonest and "working" a system with few checks or balances. Many asylum-seekers were being "signed up" by firms who did little or very poor work on their behalf, but whose signature enabled the legal aid provision to kick in. No bill under £1,000 was ever scrutinised or checked with files.

But have Lord Irvine's legal aid reforms cleaned up his house? Certainly many of the "dodgier" firms have been excluded from immigration work by the introduction of legal aid contracts, supposed to guarantee a quality of work. But privately the LSC is concerned that too many were awarded and it believes some contracted firms will ultimately fail the new criteria. There are already allegations that at least one London firm is up to the old trick of "touting" from other firms in Leeds.

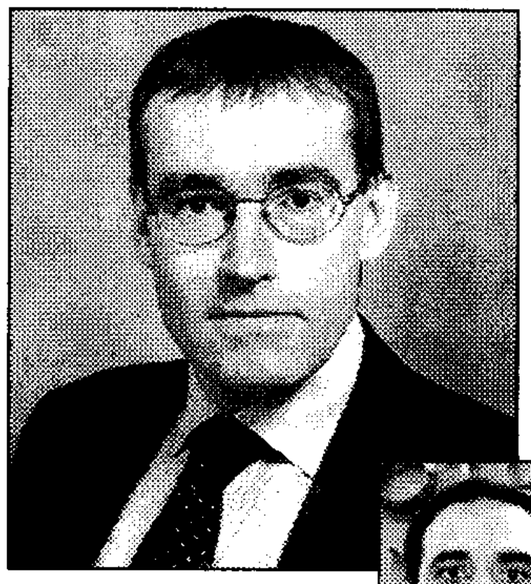
The new immigration services commissioner is only responsible for regulating the unqualified end of the immigration advisory market. Lord Irvine persuaded Jack Straw, the home secretary, to remove lawyers from the commissioner's remit. So no change there, then...

HOWARD'S END

ON 18 JULY the *Eye* received a disturbing letter from the celebrated High Holborn libel lawyers Reynolds Porter Chamberlain. The letter was written by a partner in the firm, Keith Mathieson, described as "a media lawyer specialising in defamation".

He complained about an article published in the *Eye* on 20 August 1999, almost a year previously. Mr Mathieson explained that he represented Chief Supt James Howard, and he objected to the *Eye*'s account of employment tribunal proceedings taken out by former Metropolitan police sergeant Gurpal Virdi, who once served under Mr Howard at Ealing police station.

The letter complained in particular about the *Eye*'s comment that Mr Virdi had been "arrested and suspended on trumped-up charges of racism", a suggestion which had, claimed Mr Mathieson, caused great offence to Mr Howard. The solicitors had advised Mr Howard that he had been libelled by the *Eye*, and that there was "no possible defence" to the libel. They demanded an apology. Their client's attitude to damages, they declared in a familiar phrase, "will be influenced by the nature of your reply".



Media lawyer: Keith Mathieson

The *Eye*'s reply was much more brief. Our lawyers pointed out that the contested article was a report of an industrial tribunal and was therefore privileged.

On 21 August, Mr Mathieson wrote again to the *Eye* with the not altogether mournful news that "even with the benefit of a conditional fee arrangement", their client "cannot afford to take proceedings against *Private Eye*". That might have been the end of the matter, but Mr Mathieson could not resist the temptation to deliver a further lecture on the *Eye*'s claim that our report was fair and accurate and therefore privileged. Among the weighty points he made was the following:

"The impression conveyed by the article is that Mr Virdi has been the victim of injustice and that the odds are unfairly stacked against him in his justified claim of racial discrimination. We question whether that is the impression that would have been gained by an independent observer of the hearing."

It was not long before Mr Mathieson's question got a unanimous answer: from independent members of the North London industrial tribunal. As reported in the last *Eye*, the tribunal found that Gurpal Virdi had indeed been the victim of injustice, that the odds had indeed been stacked against him and that his claim of racial discrimination had been entirely justified. The tribunal also found:

● that the computer evidence which had convinced three Scotland Yard commanders "beyond all doubt" that Virdi had sent out racist mail to himself and his colleagues was utterly unreliable, and that indeed the print runs on which the police had relied for their verdict against (and sacking of) Mr Virdi were not even the runs which produced the racist hate mail;

● that "we found much of the approach adopted by the respondents (Metropolitan police) to lack the impartiality and inquisitorial approach that one would expect".

As for Mr Howard, he had behaved better than most of his colleagues. But the tribunal found as follows: "PS Virdi was taped (without his knowledge) during his personnel interview with Chief Inspector Howard. The respondents (police) accept that this was an act to his detriment. Was it an act of entrapment? Chief Supt Howard spoke to the profiler before he conducted the interview. Chief Supt Howard was the one who raised the issue of race. The exchange presents as if he was trying to get PS Virdi to make some form of admission. In the event, PS Virdi made no such admission. Any attempt to use the interviews as an act of entrapment failed. It was clear from the transcript of the tape that PS Virdi did not demonstrate any of the characteristics that the profiler had anticipated. That did not cause the investigators to question if they had the right person. Would a person other than from an ethnic minority be asked the question about race or be taped in such a way?"

Gurpal Virdi

NAREY, NAREY, QUITE CONTRARY

SEEN cheering his beloved Middlesbrough to a 3-all draw with Derby County, courtesy of computer giants EDS earlier this month, was none other than Martin Narey, head of the prison service. Mr Narey has of course just awarded the £50m contract to run the new prison IT system, Quantum, to EDS.

But never mind. As a prison service spokewoman said, Mr Narey had sought permission from home office chiefs to attend and, anyway, the match followed a business meeting. So that's all right, then — and it explains why EDS also paid for Narey's prison service chauffeur to attend.

Narey might be better employed keeping his eye on the Blantyre House (see *Eyes passim*) match which is due to kick off in the Commons before the home affairs select committee next month. If his letter to the Bishop of Maidstone is anything to go by, the four-month trawl through Kent's model resettlement jail has netted precisely nothing to justify the costly, damaging and unprecedented raid by officers in riot gear and the removal of the highly respected governor, Eoin McLellan-Murray.

Mr Narey says the emerging findings have raised concerns over the nature of some work placements and temporary releases and over the manipulative activities of one inmate "with whom the governor became too close". They fall far short of the claims of "intelligence of serious criminal activity" that was said to have provoked the raid. (As Kent police confirmed to the *Eye*, there never was any such intelligence for them to investigate.) Like all the allegations so-far levelled at the jail and governor, these new ones will not come up to independent scrutiny. They will simply add weight to the belief of many that the action was triggered by the dislike of area manager Tom Murtagh for the much-praised regime.

Meanwhile McLellan-Murray remains on full pay but in limbo. His scheduled transfer to the education department has been delayed by civil servants who fear more media publicity when the home affairs committee sits.

And what effect has the raid had at the jail, whose record before May had been exemplary? There has already been one escape and four temporary absences by inmates...

● WHEN Ian Thomas, assistant governor of Feltham Young Offenders Institute, resigned at the start of August in protest at the "Dickensian" conditions encountered by inmates, prison service supremo Martin Narey dismissed his action on the BBC *Today* programme, saying it did not make sense in the light of a new £6m juvenile unit opening at Feltham later that month.

The official press launch of the new unit was due to be held on 7 September, and invitations were sent out two days beforehand. Then, in the early hours of 6 September, 17-year-old Kevin Henson, who had been on remand in the juvenile wing of the young offenders institute since 28 August, was found hanged in his cell. The following day's media opening was cancelled.

THE SNAILS OF JUSTICE

JUST because three prison officers at Wormwood Scrubs were jailed earlier this month for beating up inmates, it does not mean the police and crown prosecution service (CPS) are suddenly getting their act together. Delays in investigating such crimes are still inordinately long.

At the Scrubs a further 23 staff are due to stand trial. But up to 22 others alleged to have been involved in even more serious assaults are said to be in danger of getting off entirely because of the delay in the police investigation.

More than two years after complaints were first raised about serious attacks on six particular inmates, files have still not gone to the crown prosecution service (CPS). Lawyers acting for the prisoners say key witness were not interviewed until months after police knew of their existence.

As part of the huge Scrubs investigation, officers were prioritising allegations of assault dating back to November 1996. But as some of the more serious cases relate to events in the jail as long ago as 1991, prison officers may well be able to argue that such delay means they cannot get a fair trial when, or if, the cases ever get to court.

The CPS too is under serious fire for delay and flawed decision-making in cases involving allegations against police and prison officers. Inquest, the campaigning group concerned with deaths in custody, has protested to ministers about the possibility of justice being denied and the anguish caused to bereaved families by the way both police and CPS handle cases involving agents of the state.

For example, after no fewer than three separate police inquiries, the CPS has been considering for nearly a year the file on officers involved in the death of Roger Sylvester. The 30-year-old died in January 1999 after being restrained by up to eight London policemen.

Two and half years after Christopher Alder, 37, died in a Hull police station, the CPS is reconsidering its decision not to prosecute five police officers after an inquest jury decided last month that the ex-paratrooper had been "unlawfully killed".

It is also re-examining its files on the case of Glenn Howard, a 44-year-old musician, who died after being restrained by London officers in 1997. Another inquest jury found last May that he was subjected to "excessive restraint and subsequent neglect of medical care". The coroner had refused to allow the jury to return an unlawful killing verdict, but some jurors shouted across to the family that that was the verdict they had wanted to bring in.

As the last *Eye* reported, the CPS has been forced by the high court to reconsider the case of Alton Manning, who died in Blakenhurst Prison back in 1995. And lawyers acting for the family of Harry Stanley — shot dead a year ago by a police marksman after a table-leg he was carrying was mistaken for a shotgun — had been promised a decision by the CPS this month. However, they learned last week that the case has been referred back to a senior barrister. No one now knows when there will be a decision.

Daniel Machover, of Hickman and Rose, solicitors acting for the Stanley family and most of the Scrubs inmates, said: "The police and CPS are treating these cases much more cautiously than they would assaults or deaths on the street. You would not expect these kind of unprecedented delays in cases involving civilians. Political sensitivities in my view are getting in the way of efficient decision-making."

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE great economist John Maynard Keynes is said to have pithily pronounced on the relationship of borrowers and banks: "If you owe the bank manager £100 you are at his mercy, if you owe the bank manager £1,000 he is at your mercy." Keynes of course was talking pre-1939 pounds. But turn these figures into £1m and £10m and the point is just as valid today. A lesson bankers to Maxwell, Nadir and other great crooks learned and which the government is now learning with the dome.

The brutal truth is that having failed to kill the project three years ago, Tony and his cronies are now at its mercy. There is clearly no amount of lottery money they will not hand over to prevent its closure ahead of schedule which would drive the final nail into their coffin of humiliation. After all, what's another £47m when you have already spent £580m against an expected £399m? And that argument gets even stronger from here on in. Next time round — and there is bound to be a next time —the maths will again be irresistible. After all now the choice will be writing off £628m or putting in one "final" contribution of £10m, £20m or £30m.

Should we be surprised at the scale of the dome fiasco? Not at all. In January 1997, three years before the dome opened, *Eye* 916 readers were alerted to the great misgivings felt by the business elite about the then Tory great idea of Michael Heseltine. Misgivings which persuaded many of the corporate sponsors approached to say "no". Misgivings which were even shared by some of the sponsors who did sign up.

These misgivings were based on the belief that

> ...eople have their arms up their backs."
> The business elite who have been approached know the exhibition does not make commercial sense. Hezza admitted as such at a crisis meeti... ...year when he...
>
> *From Eye 916*

the dome did not make commercial sense. Hezza himself admitted as much by telling a meeting of potential sponsors to "make a leap of faith". Now out of government and almost out of politics but not yet out of the dome, Hezza still claims it was a good idea. But then he would, wouldn't he!

Heseltine's ministerial colleague Virginia Bottomley will also not be surprised that the £580m budget figure has proved way off beam. She told sponsors back in 1996 that such grand designs "always go over budget". How right she was. But that is no satisfaction to those sponsors who have yet to pay up.

Part of the concern felt by the captains of industry was that this world beater was to be sited at Greenwich. Property developers always recite the mantra credited to Land Securities founder Harold Samuel that the key to success is "location, location, location". Greenwich failed that test from day one.

But perhaps the greatest concern felt by those approached to put their hands into corporate wallets to the tune of £150m was the poor impression they had of those in charge of making the dome happen. Ace Tory Whitehall fixer Sir Peter now Lord Levene was said to have been withering in his criticism of the dome management as being not up to the job. Yet many of these same inadequates were allowed to remain in charge when Labour took over. Levene's concerns, who he told and what he said, may soon be repeated to the national audit office (NAO) as it prepares its investigation of the fiasco.

In particular the decision to confirm Jennie Page,

> sec... ...
> such projects "always go over budget". The only question is by how much will the new reduced £580 million be exceeded. The betting is that the final bill will be nearer £800 million — if all goes well. That's ...aver and...
>
> *From Eye 916*

who had no meaningful commercial experience, in charge of the project was seen as a bad mistake by those top businessmen who came in contact with her. She became the darling of the dear leader and his closest cronies Peter Mandelson and Charlie (Lord) Falconer. But what that trio know about business from personal experience could be contained on the back of a small postage stamp with space to spare. So it became the blind leading the deaf over the Greenwich precipice.

Most if not all the corporate sponsors anted up their £12m apiece in the belief that this would buy them influence at the court of King Tony. All had commercial reasons to want the government on their side. Chief among these was British Airways, a reliable Tory ally which under chief executive Bob Ayling soon became an equally reliable Tony ally. But given his track record at BA, is it any wonder he was equally useless in spotting the financial chaos inside the dome?

Once again the City saw Ayling's inadequacies and failures well before the government. But then BA has a share price and shareholders to answer to. In the Downing Street of the blind and the deaf he, like

> ...ve to remain open beyond 2001.
> A large part of the pessimism felt by those approached to invest is the dismal impression created by those running the Millennium commission. Ace Whitehall bean counter Sir Peter Levene, called in to help rescue the project by ...ing big business...
>
> *From Eye 916*

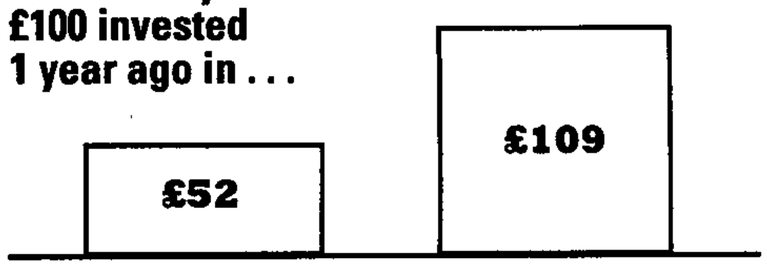
Page and the dome itself, was a success until the dear leader suddenly discovered he was a failure.

While the running of the dome was clearly the responsibility of the executives led by Page and then M. Gerbil, Pierre-Yves Gerbeau, the failings exhibited by the non-executives such as Ayling or Michael Grade and former Murdoch lieutenant Sam Chisholm cannot be ignored. How was the lack of simple financial controls or clear oversight of the contracts, liabilities and assets allowed to come about on their watch? They, after all, did have commercial experience.

"Changi Jim" Slater was not an economist but he was an accountant and knew a thing or ten about building grand financial edifices on foundations of sand. He declared that one of the key rules of successful investment was that when it came to losses "the first cut is the cheapest". A lesson the dear leader and his fellow business ingénues clearly never learned from all their cosying up to corporate chieftains.

Stock Horror

Belgo — 'Looking badly... mouled'


Value today of £100 invested 1 year ago in . . .
£52
£109
...Luke Johnson's mussels-and-beer Belgo restaurants
...the rest of the stock market

THE phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed has once again made a loss at his flagship Paris Ritz hotel. Latest figures for last year show that while turnover grew slightly to £33m, there was a £1.3m loss compared with the £1.2m profit — virtually the first since Fayed took over — in 1998. That profit was entirely due to a one-off royalty payment.

The 1999 loss is the result of the £52m loan Fayed negotiated from a German bank last year to finance the purchase of two neighbouring freeholds and to refinance an existing Swiss bank loan. The interest bill is more than £2m a year and the bank also holds the shares in the Ritz company as security for repayment.

Another interesting detail is that only weeks before the December 1999 year end, the Ritz's auditor PricewaterhouseCoopers was replaced by KPMG. As PwC continues to be the Harrods auditor this switch raises some interesting questions, even if there is the usual statutory declaration that the resignation involves nothing to be brought to the attention of third parties. But then it rarely if ever does if such formal declarations are to be believed.

SOURCES close to City lawyers Travers Smith Braithwaite suggest the firm may have suffered an attack of déjà-vu as a result of its relationship with security services group Armor Holdings. TSB have recently resigned as London lawyers to the Florida-based company. It is suggested this may in part relate to allegations of telephone bugging being made against senior executives in Armor. Richard Bethell, the former chief executive of Armor's DSL subsidiary, has claimed that his home telephone was bugged after he fell out with Armor chief executive Jonathan Spiller. This claim has been backed by another former Armor executive Nick del Rosso. All of this would have been understandably unsettling to TSB, who were grievously embarrassed by their role in facilitating Andrew Regan's use of stolen internal Co-Operative Wholesale Society documents during his abortive bid for CWS three years ago.

This resulted in a Law Society disciplinary probe and a claim for damages from CWS to whom the lawyers had to apologise after dumping Regan. Suggestions of criminal behaviour by another client would not have been welcome, no matter how fervent the denials.

'Slicker'

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

Emmo
MEGACORP OIL Co
HAVE NO FEAR GENTS — WHOEVER WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR PUTTING AN EXTRA 2P A LITRE...
...ON THE PRICE OF OUR FUEL IN AN EXTRAORDINARY WEEK WHERE DEMAND FAR EXCEEDED SUPPLY WILL BE FIRED!
IT SHOULD HAVE GONE UP 10P A LITRE!!

Aptitude tests aid entry to elite academic institutions

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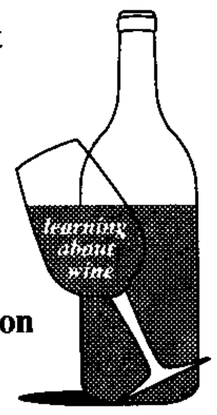

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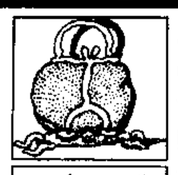

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ATTACHED, 49 years old male seeks lady attached or otherwise for mid-week sexually activated affair in Oxford area. Box 2311.

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Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle St, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017. Printed by East End Offset Ltd, Empson St, London E3 3LT. Distributed by P. E. Distribution Ltd, Mortimer Hse, 230/236 Lavender Hill, SW11 1LE 020 7223 9971